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**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.**

**Hearts and Minds on the Home Front: What Military Leaders Can Do to Attract
African American Males to Careers as Officers in the Army**

by

Lester W. Knotts

Lieutenant Colonel, US Army

**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the
requirements of the Masters Degree in Military Art.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily
endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

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Abstract

This Naval War College Advanced Research Study examines race relations, assimilation, acculturation and the resultant attitudes developed by and about African-American cadets and commissioned officers with respect to transitions and careers in the United States Army. This empirical study was conducted through a literature review and interviews with U.S. Military Academy cadets and commissioned officers who shared their experiences and thoughts on transitioning to military service from a race-conscious society. Results from this study are expected to inform Military Academy and U.S. Army leaders on methods and processes that will make transition into military service a positive experience for African-American officer candidates and point them toward careers in the Army. Findings from this study illustrate the complex issues that are still faced by African-Americans, regardless of education and economic status, as they enter the Army. Recommendations from this study are cogent and direct, with the ultimate possibility of enabling change in the status quo.

Research Question

Given the prominence of race awareness and racial tensions in American culture, how can the United States Army gain an understanding of transitions to military service for African-American officer candidates with a view toward improving retention of officers who enter service through the United States Military Academy? What are the barriers to assimilation and acculturation involved in the transition process and what methods are best employed to make the transition an objective-based yet positive experience for African-American officer candidates?

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Hearts and Minds on the Home Front: What Military Leaders Can Do to Attract African American Males to Careers as Officers in the Army

The American Negro problem is in the heart of the American. It is there that the interracial tension has its focus. It is there that the decisive struggle goes on.

--Gunnar Myrdal, 1944

. . .the consequences of [this nation's] history of relations between black and white Americans has left a legacy of pain . . .despite many improvements in the economic, political, and social position of black Americans . . .conditions of poverty, segregation, discrimination, and social fragmentation of the most serious proportions continue. . .the one constant is blacks' continuing subordinate social position.

--Gerald Jaynes, 1989

" . . . there's a lot of unspoken "stuff" to work through before honest discussions about race can occur. . .and I think Scarlett O'Hara, iconic figure,[still] kind of stands in the way of all that." Don't kid yourself: The specter of who owned whom, and its nasty aftereffects, will be with us for a long, long time in this country.

--Karen Grigsby Bates, 2008

Exigency

Behind the perennial best-seller, the *Holy Bible*, the two most popular novels of their respective times in American history are *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (published in March of 1852, Harriett Beecher Stowe's sentimental novel was the best selling book in the world in the 19th century) and *Gone with the Wind* (published in 1936, Margaret Mitchell's only novel was the best selling book in the 20th century). Both books have a core theme of slavery and selfish greed. It is white/black relations in this country, and the legacy of the peculiar institution called slavery that color much of what we do in social and legal policy in contemporary America.

The epigraphs and the aforementioned novels take the place of relating historical background that might inform readers about the American national mindset with respect to race relations. Attitudes and discussions about race in the United States are tempered with caution, resentment, and fear. Inadvertent racial comments cause professionals to lose their jobs,

classrooms to be chilled, and cases to be thrown out of court. Being labeled racist today is ruinous. That stigma is relatively new.

After the American Civil War, Emancipation and manumission allowed the passage of Civil Rights Act of 1866¹ to secure the legal and political equality of black American citizens. Those laws were not enforced. That was 140 years ago. During the Second World War, by segregating units and relegating most blacks to non-combat roles the US Government declared black soldiers physically, mentally, and even *morally* ill-suited to fight alongside whites until President Truman signed Executive Order 9981 desegregating the armed forces.² That was 60 years ago. Brigadier General Remo Butler explained the damaging effects of cultural miscommunication in an article published in the military journal *Parameters* entitled “Why Black Officers Fail.”³ That was 10 years ago. Presently, an abiding under-representation of blacks in the U.S. Army combat branches is a source of concern. The United States Military Academy at West Point, source of nearly 1000 Army commissioned officers each year, doggedly attempts to address Army personnel needs by adjusting the mix of cadet candidates invited to join the Corps of Cadets for the four years of regimented professional development. In a typically candid self-assessment, the Military Academy completed an institutional self-study that indicated class composition goals do not anticipate the needs of the Army for under-represented groups five to ten years into the future. Additionally, the report notes that a paucity of black

¹ The April 1866 Act declared that “all persons born in the United States and not subject to any foreign power, excluding Indians not taxed, are hereby declared to be citizens of the United States; and such citizens, of every race and color, without regard to any previous condition of slavery or involuntary servitude, . . . shall have the same right . . . to full and equal benefit of all laws and proceedings for the security of person and property, as is enjoyed by white citizens.”

² Truman’s order established the President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity In the Armed Forces. This committee was intended to create conditions for equality without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin.

³ Butler asserts that “black officers who graduate from West Point or a predominately white institution seem to have a better chance of succeeding than black officers who graduate from historically black colleges.”

officers creates a shortage of representative role models.⁴ Some under-representation is due to preparation and education of black youths that leaves them ill-equipped to compete successfully as cadets or as officers. Much of that early development is beyond the scope of the Army to tend. Other areas that create a dearth of black Army officers may be successfully redressed within existing functions of the U.S. Army and its primary feeder institution, West Point, which provides twenty-five percent of the commissioned officers to the U.S. Army each year.⁵ Active recruiting for minority cadets is a part of the West Point Admissions team duties. The Army Diversity Office has the lead advisory role assisting commanders to make their organizations more welcoming to soldiers from the entire population. Assigning minority role models and a robust Professional Military Education program that includes a Consideration of Others component helps the Military Academy create an environment that welcomes black candidates. Such efforts improve conditions for potential black officers. Understanding what forces are at work in the military milieu can begin to remedy vestigial perceptions of black inadequacy—negative perceptions held about blacks, and by the black candidates themselves.

Race-based ideas in the military derive from American society at large. Existing conditions at West Point alone warrant continued investigation and dialogic transparency to work out unresolved race-based tensions in society, and especially in American military services, where a lack of professional cooperation and misunderstandings have lethal implications. This research responds to the challenge by entering the dialogue on race with a purpose of making military life more appealing to African American officers who have as much to offer the U.S. Army as any other group of American citizen-soldiers.

⁴ Institutional Self-Study, 8.

⁵ U.S. Military Academy has an overall 82% graduation rate, and generates over 900 commissioned officers in several ceremonies each year. Graduates assume a minimum contractual obligation to serve five years.

Methodology and Definitions

Research into the American social psyche concerning racial and cultural attitudes provides much of the contextual setting for this study. It is in the details of individual thoughts and actions that such collective thinking is concretized in a way that readers can make meaning. Introduction to and empathy with real people in real places undergoing real situations clears away the fog of theory and helps us see clearly to identify with persons whose life chances are directly impacted by the attitudes revealed in the report. Effectively humanizing the subject of racial perceptions should aid understanding of the current state of racial conditions for a small segment of the U.S. population—one predisposed toward military service. Face-to-face interviews are one method to personalize what might otherwise be mere data streams from impersonal bulk-answer surveys, and obviate potential group-think that can come from collective interviews. Limiting questioner bias takes special care, especially when developing neutral discussion prompts.

By design the interviewer is essentially in control of the initial exchange. However, the research goal was to have interviewees understand that they were, as much as possible, equal partners in the discussion.⁶ Equality between discussants was attained by drawing on experience in instructing others in deploying individual voice, and by identification with the interviewees as a member of their various military, cultural, and professional communities. Guidance from professional institutional and academic researchers helped shape the questions.⁷ In addition to the influential role of the interviewer on the outcome, interviews must invariably take place in a social context, and that context affects responses. Interviews took place in homes or familiar and

⁶ Fontana, "Interviewing," 361, 3.

⁷ Thanks to Dr. Mort Ender of West Point's Behavioral Sciences Department, and to Major David Lyle from the Office of Economic Manpower and Analysis for their guidance on interviewing and for additional bibliographic resources.

comfortable neutral spaces of the interviewees' choice such as libraries and restaurants to further empower the interviewees. Interviewees were drawn from lists of West Point graduates and candidates for admission in an attempt to achieve a chronological range. The senior respondent was 86 years old; the junior was 18.

Opportunity sampling

Empirical evidence is plentiful from the US Census, from Educational Testing Services, and from university studies about various demographic groups and their relative success or failure as students and as professionals. For example, West Point graduation rates reveal a consistently lower graduation rate for black cadets than for the general population, even accounting for those turn-back cadets who return for an additional year to finish the program.

The following compiled data show a consistently lower graduation rate for black cadets at West Point over a recent 34-year period. Low numbers of blacks in the U.S. Corps of Cadets prior to 1971 and the American Civil Rights Movement preclude extending collective numbers backward in time in a meaningful way. Blacks were present at the Military Academy for a brief period at the end of the 19th century when post-Civil War, Reconstruction-era enfranchisement set conditions for a small group of black Americans to enter and graduate from the Military Academy, including Henry Flipper (USMA Class of 1877) and Charles Young (USMA Class of 1889). The first black West Point graduate of the 20th century, 4th black overall, would be Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., West Point class of 1936.

25 and 30% differences in completion rates in the early years give way to more single digit differences in later years. In six years on the tabulated data, black males graduated at a *higher* rate than the general cadet population. Those statistical anomalies and the trend toward parity in graduation percentages represent a potential positive reality that further reduction or

elimination of the persistent 5% difference can be routinely achieved. Identifying those elements of that will contribute to achieving common graduation rates for all cadets requires a detailed, multifaceted investigation. The data below are part of the military history within the broader history that provides impetus for the interviews and recommendations that come after.

Class	African-American						Total Population	Cadet
	Entered		Graduated					
Year	M	F	M	%	F	%		%
1971	7		3	42.9			1054	69.2
1972	9		7	77.8			1244	66.1
1973	44		15	34.1			1439	65.6
1974	41		24	58.5			1377	60.5
1975	53		32	60.4			1339	64.4
1976	50		35	70.0			1378	62
1977	79		32	40.5			1376	52.7
1978	81		51	63.0			1435	68.3
1979	86		50	58.1			1435	63.6
1980	60	3	30	50.0	2	66.7	1378	62
1981	80	4	45	56.3	2	50.0	1366	65.7
1982	71	4	40	56.3	1	25.0	1279	65.2
1983	63	9	34	54.0	2	22.2	1274	65.3
1984	76	15	45	59.2	8	53.3	1303	69.1
1985	105	19	78	74.3	15	78.9	1340	70.7
1986	102	25	54	52.9	17	68.0	1271	71.6
1987	85	27	68	80.0	15	55.6	1251	74
1988	88	13	62	70.5	6	46.2	1239	71.5
1989	78	17	61	78.2	11	64.7	1264	75
1990	82	9	57	69.5	6	66.7	1175	71.3
1991	80	15	48	60.0	7	46.7	1204	72.4
1992	93	15	60	64.5	11	73.3	1158	73.7
1993	71	11	44	62.0	5	45.5	1207	76.1
1994	66	14	51	77.3	13	92.9	1171	78.5
1995	66	14	52	78.8	13	92.9	1089	81.4
1996	66	14	54	81.8	10	71.4	1053	79.1
1997	68	16	51	75.0	10	62.5	1075	76.2
1998	42	17	29	69.0	13	76.5	993	78.7
1999	63	22	45	71.4	16	72.7	1012	81
2000	66	17	53	80.3	14	82.4	999	82.3
2001	80	6	51	63.8	5	83.3	1006	77.8
2002	95	18	60	63.2	13	72.2	1053	79.6
2003	66	23	46	69.7	18	78.3	945	78.7
2004	85	18	67	78.8	12	66.7	993	80.8
2005	77	21	55	71.4	18	85.7	997	79.2
Total	2424	386	1589	65.6	263	68.1	42172	70.9

Figure 1. West Point Comparative Graduation Rates

Records show that after commissioning, black officers continue to lag behind their majority peers in terms of professional advancement. As before, economic, historical, cultural, and psychological reasons bear on this complicated calculus of performance. There is no easy solution. Understanding what we can, and then applying that knowledge to inform our officer education and development programs is simply prudent for the Army. What we know is that black cadets and black officers have lower performance metrics than their white peers. Brigadier general Remo Butler offers a trend in the following figure that suggests black officers are less competitive for flag officer rank:

	White non-Hispanic		Black non-Hispanic	
Rank	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
General Officer	278	90.3	25	8.1
Colonel	3,194	88.2	233	6.4
Lieutenant Colonel	7,518	83.0	920	10.2
Major	11,048	80.0	1,715	12.4
Captain	17,267	77.9	2,663	12.0
1st Lieutenant	7,571	78.5	1,027	10.7
2d Lieutenant	6,452	77.8	865	10.4

Figure 2. Officers by Race, September 1998

In 1998, according to Butler, blacks accounted for 26.6 percent of the Army, and 11.1 percent of the officer strength. The focus in his article is on a different disparity, one within the officer ranks themselves. Up to the rank of major, black officers constitute about 12 percent of the officer corps, but in the higher ranks the percentage decreases by nearly half. Conversely, as

rank increases, the percentage of white officers increases by about 10 percent.⁸ Part of the reason for the tapering off of black officer promotions is explainable by lack of role models, less mentoring, and mutual cultural misunderstandings. Butler assumes that the lower promotion rates are not the result of institutionalized racism in the Army. He also assumes that black officers are as capable upon commissioning as any other officers entering the service. If these assumptions hold, the Army can find and apply a solution to the challenge. Butler suggests that the quality and type of education officers receive from the various commissioning sources makes a difference in their ability to assimilate successfully.

To investigate the power relationships in the military for a select source of commissioning, opportunity sampling will provide research data into the past and present expectations and realizations for African American officers from West Point. What this type of qualitative research does is augment high-volume empiricism with low-volume personal detail that helps expound upon the tabulated data on a more effectual level.

The interviews for this study were semi-structured—designed to have each of the interviewees answer the same core questions (see Appendix C). Using a series of common questions is a means to gain understanding of both individual Army officers and the thought processes of officer candidates, and helps to signify trends in perspectives on the military experiences of African American males. The traditional qualitative research of the type undertaken here is more subjective than objective, tempered by various social identities of race, gender, and politics.⁹ But it is possible to espouse a critical perspective that is openly ideological¹⁰ while empowering the subjects of the study and maintaining democratizing goals.

⁸ Butler, 1

⁹ Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman help explain in *Designing Qualitative Research* that biography and interaction in an emergent field of research are bound to reflect the personal biography of the researcher.

¹⁰ One purpose of this research is to seek ways to improve the conditions of black males in military service.

One purpose of this work is to establish the facts of particular cultural difference that may be used to augment the learning experience of all officers, perhaps at the institutional stops along the formal military education journey. A more adequate preparation of potential officers for their post-commissioning experience is likely to result. The study should also expose the ways in which coping mechanisms by instructors and students in the midst of a hegemonic cultural and educational practice can lead to unintended and unnecessary conflict. Silence, or alternatively, aggressive ways of coping with the pressure to evince fully assimilated behaviors may appear as passive resistance, or as active rebellion against authority. Knowledge of subordinate and leader responses to mission and other orders opens the ways for improved communication among the leaders and the led from various cultures.

Research and interviews together will inform each other to help determine trends toward or away from careers of military service. Informed with these data, recommendations may be derived that are designed to improve the efficacy of African American male officers and to thereby improve the Army that needs their plentiful talents.

This research seeks to reveal expectations and experiences from entry level officer candidate to the senior commissioned officer. Interviews spanning a chronological range or participants help to show what consistent experiences are present, if any, and to suggest a direction for the continued evolution of an effective retention program that continues to address relevant factors in officer development. After establishing a brief American historical context for the social situation blacks operate in, archival records will describe how race relations were lived out in the country. Included is a critique of the intercultural situation in terms of social impact on minorities undergoing the stress of living in a racialized society. Augmenting the analysis are personal interviews with African Americans who have endured the dual social and

military pressures to acculturate and to assimilate. These two socializing pressures are distinct from the two-ness W.E.B. Du Bois describes—the internal warring of ideals that was common among early black soldiers in the American Army.¹¹ That earlier tension of being black and being American was a more public one—a black soldier was fighting to support Constitutional freedom while at the same time being denied those freedoms. That openly contradictory warring is much less applicable today. Yet there are new tensions replacing the old. At the outset, several terms that help to describe these psychological tensions require operational definitions: *racialized*, *acculturate*, *assimilate*, and *appropriate*.

Racialized is a term that indicates conditions where the social concept of race is a subject of notice. That is, a person entering a racialized environment would both be noted as having, and would take notice of, various markers that indicate the race—noticeable differences among human groupings—of persons in that context. Many times the indicators are physical or visual cues such as epicanthic folds, hair texture, or skin pigmentation. Verbal cues such as accent or use of a particular creolized language or other vernacular can mark a person as part of a group, also. By definition, racialized settings or racialized societies are neutral. A *racialized* society becomes a *racist* society when those markers of difference are used as reasons to alter treatment of members of the marked group—for better or worse. The connotation is that racism is applied in a negative way. Practically, when cultural or biological markers set a social group apart for negative or for positive treatment, either would be considered racist, as long as one group is held to be superior to another.

It is not news that members of human societies have been making such distinctions among persons and groups. Religious strata were a matter of record in 1st century Israel. Roman plebes comprised the lower class in ancient Rome. Untouchables are part of a caste system in

¹¹ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* 9

India. Socio-economic strata in the United States were well established and reinforced, notably, on Ellis Island. The irony of such human distinctions in America is most pronounced after the end of slavery. Stories about the house slaves being the lighter-skinned slaves and the field slaves being the darker ones are based on reality. This skin-color prejudice continued to be carried out even after the master-slave relationship was legally broken.

After emancipation, the mulattoes assumed the leadership among black Americans and obtained the better jobs, such as they were. But this budding, fragile middle class was scarcely well off. Scorned and isolated by the general white population, its members developed their own institutions with the meager resources available. Inevitably, they re-created a pale imitation of the white world complete with their own coming-out parties and cotillions. They distinguished themselves from the black masses by quitting the Baptist and Methodist churches for the Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian or Roman Catholic denominations. Though treated like any other blacks by the white population, they took what comfort they could in their lighter skin. Some Negro colleges even requested photos from applicants to make sure they did not admit too many dark-skinned students.¹²

Assuming that prejudice is only white-on-black or is exclusive to American blacks and American whites is to ignore the facts. This project was undertaken because attracting black males to the commissioned officer corps is so difficult. Looking deeply into the society, the family, and the individual thinking may reveal some useful information that Army leaders can use to make the service more welcoming to that under-represented group.

Rather than separating people according to some artificial criteria that details relative personal worth, our goal is acculturated blending of people in ways that advance society. Consider the volunteer forces of the United States. As Brigadier General Butler mentions in his article:

The Army is primarily a reflection of a white-male-dominated culture with which many young blacks have little or no experience. And since many whites have little or no experience with black culture in America, it is difficult for many white commanders to

¹² "America's Rising Black," 2

understand and acknowledge the difference with a sense of neutrality or an unbiased perspective.

Although we sometimes claim to have a homogeneous society in the United States, there are racial differences in attitudes on everything from politics to religion to music to dress. For a young black man or woman who has grown up in a predominately black neighborhood, possibly in a family with no previous military background, and who perhaps attended one of the historically black colleges, the jump into the white-male-dominated culture of the military can be a real culture shock. Social conflict is bound to complicate his or her challenge to build a successful military career.¹³

Individuals desiring to assimilate to the military culture get lots of help, starting in basic training. Assimilation to the military community is necessary—but total assimilation is a liability without some acculturated sharing.

Assimilation is generally an asymmetrical arrangement. The dominant culture draws in the non-dominant culture and recasts it in a way that eradicates most or all of the original cultural markers. It involves fitting in by assuming behavior patterns and attitudes of the members of the dominant group. Assimilation is a process either party can accomplish—the dominant or non-dominant cultural agents can make the process occur. In all cases, the minority culture is absorbed into the dominant or majority culture. This is akin to metabolizing a cultural salad; the cultural input has an effect, but the effect is unrecognizable as distinguishable from any other cultural input, because it has been so transformed as to erase original markers of difference. Assimilation may be gradual or dramatically quick. The result is sameness. The requirement for a high degree of sameness among the members of a military organization allows the rapid, united, and predictable response of the organization and its subordinate units and elements. Under emergency conditions, rapid, united and predictable actions help reduce chaos.

Acculturation is akin to the mixing of warm air with cold air until equilibrium is achieved. Each culture is modified in the coming together of two or more cultures. The exchange of customs, art, and symbols is relatively symmetric, with no group having particular

¹³ Butler in *Parameters*, 65

dominance beyond the appeal of the contributions to the new social mix. Acculturation has to do with a melding of cultures. Each culture gains the benefits of exchange artistic ideological, creative, and intellectual trading. Whether the cultural interchange is on an equal basis, as happens when no dominant culture is present, or occurs on an asymmetrical basis, acculturation is marked by valuable sharing of cultural elements and values. Each society involved is modified by the encounter. The notion of America as a cultural melting pot hearkens to this ideal form of interchange where everyone benefits.

The stylized chart below shows illustrates graphically the amount of adjustment that four cohorts have to make to achieve the desired sameness in Army assimilation. The model deliberately lacks gradations from zero to full assimilation. Persons in each demographic being assimilated will have more or less difficulty than others in the same group. Positions of the groups merely suggest how far members might have to move relative to each other in order to fit in with the predominantly white, predominantly male nature of the current and historical Army composition. The horizontal arrow suggests a continuum where assimilation and acculturation can occur at the same time. These features of coming together in a new social network do not, and need not, take place along a linear track. Both forms of social blending must occur. The Army can promote both the requisite assimilation and the more permissive acculturation.

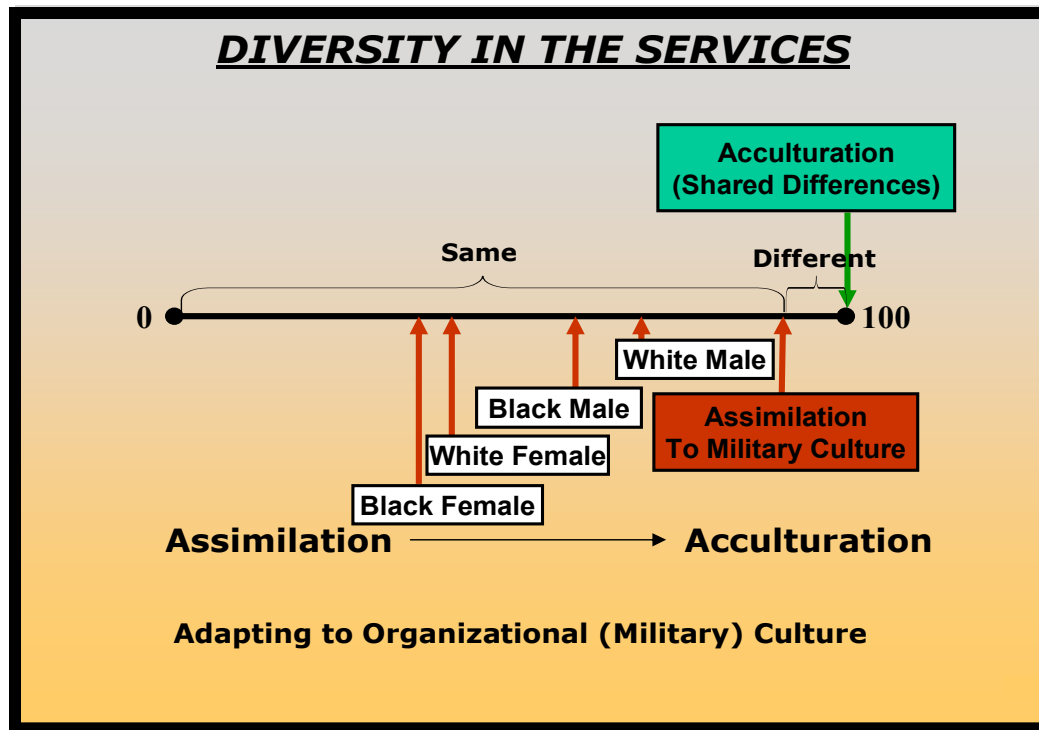


Figure 3. Assimilation-Acculturation Continuum¹⁴

Whereas a lesser degree of acculturation is desirable to reduce tendencies toward too much individuality, assimilation that removes all vestiges of the uniqueness of individuals removes aspects of difference that can help groups generate innovative solutions. Current and future complex challenges need sophisticated thinkers with a variety of perspectives to resolve problems and to accomplish yet-to-be-fathomed missions.

The final term is *appropriation*. Appropriation is also asymmetric. This term means to take possession of cultural elements and to make use of them without giving credit and often without permission of the originator—it is a form of cultural plagiarism. Theoretically, members of non-dominant cultures could appropriate features from dominant cultures, but to do so would be a caricature of the reverse. With no ability to manage distribution or to profit from the appropriation, the act signals an impotent rebellion against exploitation by a relatively powerless

¹⁴ This diagram is a modification of a longer presentation developed by BG Andre Sayles to inform the Army Staff and West Point leadership about diversity matters.

group. Definitions about cultural exchange matter because they reveal the relative power arrangements when subculture meets culture. Power relations matter—especially in the Department of Defense.

Among military people and other professionals the very term “diversity” conjures connotations of required classes and mandatory sensitivity sessions. In spite of negative connotations associated with the term, a desirable degree of diversity can be achieved. For some, diversity automatically leads to thoughts of affirmative action and the various tensions that arise when discussing how much help, for whom, and for how long. Some organizations—including universities and businesses—keep their definitions of diversity deliberately vague so that they can avoid the inevitable public arguments and legal scuffles about why they are failing to meet diversity standards, or why they do not adhere to the working definition set out in official documents. But the Army cannot afford the luxury of obfuscation or evasion in this critical area. For the purposes of this project, diversity means differences among persons in an organization that have an effect on the organization.¹⁵

Diversity refers to the active presence and participation of people within an organization who differ by race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, physical ability, national origin, and age. It encompasses individuals as well as groups and their experiences, thoughts, and attitudes as they navigate within a majority culture that is white, Christian, heterosexual, and male.¹⁶

¹⁵ Andre Sayles, “Diversity”

¹⁶ Farias, SICCC Briefing

The Army and Army Diversity

The U.S. Department of Defense is a large, complex organization which performs a necessary security function that the American people cannot provide for themselves.¹⁷ When pressed into service by the President or Congress, the military cannot afford to fail. Yet failing to address diversity in an increasingly meaningful way may portend future failures for the American armed services, as internal cultural pressures degrade individual and unit performance, and multicultural talent useful to the military is wasted. The Army officer development program is intended to produce officers that could serve the nation's defense, and was heavily imbued with the psychology of the country—independence, freedom, and individual liberty.¹⁸ Yet the program remains conflicted by the non-homogeneity of the entering cohorts. For example, the Great Soldier Factory at West Point was producing men who were destined to fight for certain freedoms, or freedom for certain persons, yet they were themselves not free to support universal civil rights even if they believed in them. Jim Crow law prohibited it; institutional deference to the majority was systematic and exclusionary as a matter of routine practice. Such a dissonance between the West Point ideals of Duty, Honor, and Country could not long endure once cadets and graduates recognized the tension between national freedoms and local oppression. The Military Academy and the Army were fated to be among the first institutions to formally integrate in a way that moved toward equal access for all members. The laws of racial equality progressed slowly after post U.S. Civil War Emancipation. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 granted full citizenship to all persons born in the United States and further granted full and equal benefit of all laws as in enjoyed by white persons to all citizens, regardless of race or previous condition

¹⁷ Snider, et al. *Army as a Profession*

¹⁸ Zinn, 58, 73

of servitude.¹⁹ But it still took more than eight decades after the passage of this act to integrate the Army. Attitudes advance even more slowly, because attitudes cannot be legislated directly. Because the earlier statutes were not enforced, those same legal rights for African Americans were revisited 100 years later with the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960, 1964 and 1965 (prohibiting segregation, reinstating voting rights, and outlawing race-based discrimination)²⁰ during the modern Civil Rights Movement. For the military, a signal document was President Harry Truman's 1948 Executive Order Number 9981, Desegregation of the Armed Forces. That order, though implemented slowly, made large military organizations the national leaders in social and professional integration. As Charles Moskos reports:

In 1948 President Harry S. Truman abolished racial segregation in the armed services by executive order. Starting with the Korean War, in 1950, integration proceeded rapidly: first at training bases in the United States, then in combat units in Korea, and finally at U.S. military installations around the world. Racial integration in the Army was accomplished with striking speed (the process took only five years) and thoroughness, at least on a formal level. By the mid-1950s a snapshot of a hundred enlisted men on parade would have shown, say, twelve black faces; integration was a fact of life. At a time when blacks were still arguing for their educational rights before the Supreme Court and marching for their social and political rights in the Deep South, the Army accomplished integration with little outcry--**but not without cost**. . . .

One reason that integration went so smoothly was that at first it affected enlisted men almost exclusively, and enlisted men of every race, as the saying went, had always been treated "like Negroes." ***There were few black officers in the Army during the 1950s, so integration required only relatively minor adjustments on the part of the command structure; resistance to greater change might have been intense.*** If the paucity of black officers (they would make up less than three percent of all Army officers until the Vietnam era) helped to facilitate integration, ***it was also one obvious indication that racial prejudice in the armed services remained a force to contend with.***

The integration of the military has taken place in three phases. From the Pentagon's point of view the 1950s and early 1960s--phase one--represented a quiet period in race relations. The increasing activism of the civil-rights movement, coupled with the widening of the Vietnam War, led to turbulent change. Truman's executive order had brought blacks partway into the military mainstream; the upheavals of the mid- and late 1960s provided the impetus for some measure of real equality.

¹⁹ Civil Rights Act of April 9, 1866 was passed into law by the U.S. Congress over the veto of President Andrew Johnson. Certain citizens opposed the provisions of the act, and as a result, African Americans did not reap the intended benefits until the next century, after Slave Codes were abolished.

²⁰ *Common Destiny* 65, 225, 232.

Many factors and events coincided to initiate phase two. If integration was the rule on base, beyond the gates discrimination was blatant, especially in the South. Blacks were no longer disposed to accept such treatment. Where, moreover, was the black officer corps? The black draftees of the 1950s were fast becoming NCOs--the backbone of the Army--but ***as late as 1968 only 0.7 percent of the new class of plebes at West Point was black***. Racial prejudice of some sort, blacks contended, was to blame.²¹

Although attitudes cannot be legislated, observable behavior may be. Because of the Truman desegregation order, attitudes about racial inferiority and unsuitability had to be faced directly. The forced mixing of visually distinct racial groups ultimately showed that negative stereotypes concerning black soldiers and sailors were neither universally nor generally true. Yet lingering notions of black pathology remain, and are occasionally reinforced by pseudo-scientific reports or questionable test tabulations.

As the population and the force continue to shift demographically toward increased cultural diversity, understanding of differences that matter becomes increasingly important to ensure cooperation among services and among service members. Degradation of vital interpersonal cooperation between Soldiers takes place in several ways:

Soldiers who perceive that they have been ignored or maligned may disengage from the unit and refuse to cooperate;

Some soldiers quit the service as soon as their enlistment is complete, and

Some act in unacceptable demonstrations so that they will be acknowledged.

With what we already know about the value of cooperation in the military community and the necessity of working together toward a common purpose, none of these outcomes, wrought by active or benign misunderstanding, should be acceptable in military organizations. Looking more closely at the challenges can suggest approaches and processes that facilitate enhanced unit cohesion. Defining this problem again begins with defining a few more terms.

²¹ Moskos bases his report on personal observation and on numerous interviews with six black officers at the rank of general.

As stated, a practical definition of diversity is differences in people that can have an impact on the effectiveness of an Army organization.²² This is the definition applied in the U.S. Military Academy's Leading Diversity Program. The diversity advocated in this argument advocates for a small pluralist component in military society to yield a positive impact on soldier attitudes and morale. Improved attitudes enhance Army effectiveness in terms of understanding, mutual appreciation, and creative solutions to complex challenges.²³ That is, while sameness is highly desirable, partnerships among members of the military can exploit cultural differences for the common objective. Race as an indicator of cultural difference is somewhat unreliable. Race is still commonly catalogued as an element of diversity, but it is losing efficacy for several reasons.

The first reason is that race as an element of a diversity program was too ambiguous from its beginnings. The fact that certain persons of color who would be identified by blood or family origin as one African American could routinely pass themselves off as members of another (less persecuted) group strongly suggests the artificiality of using race as a distinguisher of human difference that would make a difference in the workplace. Color only matters because society makes it matter, not because of some biological imperative or human necessity.

Secondly, the idea of race is passé. Race is mainly a social construct designed to separate people into essentialized roles where behaviors and attitudes can be conveniently predictable. Trends in American demographics have complicated notions of race since the terms "Caucasoid," "Negroid," and "Mongoloid" were being taught in grade school as basic anthropological racial divisions. Readers may still see references to these terms, but rather than claim some specific human racial distinction, informed contemporary references may add that

²² Sayles, Andre H. "Equal Opportunity Versus Diversity: An Opinion."

²³ Doty and Kottis, 2

such distinctions are *purported* differences, rather than actual ones. Given the so-called “racial mixing” that has been documented since the days of legalized slavery in the United States, and the increasing number of “biracial” and “mixed race” persons in America, future considerations of race will be so parsed as to make little sense in terms of policy. Profiling that attempts to objectify any group will be bootless. The term “race” is passé.

Finally, besides the practical difficulties of continuing to divide people into racial categories, “DNA studies do not indicate that separate classifiable subspecies (races) exist within modern humans. While different genes for physical traits such as skin and hair color can be identified between individuals, no consistent patterns of genes across the human genome exist to distinguish one race from another.”²⁴ At a time when we understand that humans share 99.9 percent of genetic structure (nucleotide bases that make up genes)²⁵ in common, persistence of practices attending too much to race tells us is that the concept of race is still heavily tied to appearance—those few unique features that we can identify. When those who would be racist cannot visually or verbally identify race, potential victims of racism are allowed to *pass*, the final term that needs a brief definition. Passing is the volitional choice to identify with a cultural group inconsistent with one’s cultural group of origin. Passing usually means abandoning attachments to the culture of origin that might betray the choice to identify with the new demographic group. Passing also carries with it a psychic cost of secrecy and detachment—a multiple identity challenge that erases part of a person’s identity. The choice to pass may be done for social purposes, to be accepted into a dominant society, or for more personal reasons, such as the research accomplished by John Howard Griffin, the author of *Black Like Me*, who passed as black in the Deep South in 1959 to investigate directly the treatment black Americans

²⁴ “Minorities, Race, and Genomics,” *Human Genome Project*

²⁵ *ibid*

were experiencing.²⁶ The ability for a person to pass successfully plainly indicates that race is a social construction.²⁷ Race is an arbitrary notion conceived for purposes of establishing social hierarchies. History and practice support that case.

According to F. James Davis, retired professor of sociology,

We must first distinguish racial traits from cultural traits, since they are so often confused with each other. As defined in physical anthropology and biology, **rac**es are categories of human beings based on average differences in physical traits that are transmitted by the genes not by blood. **C**ulture is a shared pattern of behavior and beliefs that are learned and transmitted through social communication. An **ethnic group** is a group with a sense of cultural identity, such as Czech or Jewish Americans, but it may also be a racially distinctive group. A group that is racially distinctive in society may be an ethnic group as well, but not necessarily. Although racially mixed, most blacks in the United States are physically distinguishable from whites, but they are also an ethnic group because of the distinctive culture they have developed within the general American framework (*Who is Black?*)²⁸

Despite this distinction between race and culture, and despite racial mixing, use of the word race is still temporarily necessary because the term is so widespread, and because the physical aspects of race continue to figure strongly in among members of the society. Markers of race still affect how people are treated, and changing the terms will not change that fact. Useful definitions of diversity and race, until we can dismiss the term altogether, can guide leader actions to collectively move the Army to a logical and productive future in the area of race relations. The future of hope is a social context where the need to identify citizen soldiers by race will be absent because it will no longer be meaningful to do so.

In some ways, it is no longer meaningful to sort soldiers by race in the present. Differences in appearance alone probably will not improve the performance of an Army personnel detachment. Differences in specialty skills and levels of training and in culture can,

²⁶ Griffin 1

²⁷ Emerson 14

²⁸ In his article, Davis delineates the ways in which the concept of race is an uncertain distinction.

and do, make a noticeable impact. A joint organization is arguably more efficient when the members know their own services well, and when they have had prior experience with other services. Such persons bring their own service culture to the work. In fact, cultural difference can have more impact than other types of diversity when complex challenges need to be resolved or when unique approaches are needed. However, cultural differences conjoined by collecting a diverse group of soldiers for a common purpose does not *automatically* result in a better outcome. Cooperation among persons with diverse backgrounds may require some multicultural instruction to be most effective.

Reasons for Disparity

Cultural differences are not racial differences. It is cultural difference, not racial difference, which a degree of permissive acculturation in the Army can use. Differences in culture can be symbiotic in healthy ways. Too often, though, cultural differences merely create conflict, especially harmful for the under-represented culture. Some of the empirical and qualitative differences between African Americans and the dominant Euro-centric culture are language²⁹, worship³⁰, and lifestyle.³¹ The most dominant voices are those most supportive of the status quo; the most popular religious groups, for example, are those that are least likely to take a stand on racial issues.³² The inertia to maintain conditions as they are is an immense force to press against.

Maintaining the social status quo is bad because of the enduring high correlation between race and income exists in contemporary American society. Much of wealth creation has to do with ownership of real assets, including homes. The goal of home ownership was not as likely to

²⁹ Rickford, 1-5

³⁰ DeYoung, 175-176

³¹ Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith* 15, 83

³² Emerson and Smith, 166.

be realized for blacks as it was and is for white Americans. By most measures, and even with increasing opportunities for upward mobility, people of color are perpetually lower in social and economic capital than their lighter-complexioned peers.

The Money Divide

Some argue that denial of access to the post-WWII home-ownership and exclusionary banking practices have carried over to the present, leaving black citizens with less accumulated wealth to pass along to their children.³³ This claim is at least partly true. Inability to garner durables does hinder aggregation of net worth. A long-standing gap in the ability to generate wealth continues in the present. The entire discussion of housing disparity that follows is an example taken from two Vanderbilt University researchers' longitudinal study. Reading through this five-paragraph paraphrase of a lengthy report covering 90 years of housing practices in America gives some idea of the structural aspect to economic inequity—inequity that quietly but profoundly crosses multiple areas of black financial life. All italicized in the report are added for emphasis:

Widening of the wealth gap between white American and black Americans were spawned in part by institutional choices. Dramatically altered mortgage markets in the 1920's and 1930's led the government to intervene in housing markets to combat racial discrimination. The first successful intervention was the establishment of the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) in 1933. The chief mission of the HOLC was to reduce the rate of foreclosure which, in the early years of the Great Depression, had risen to astonishing levels. The HOLC also systematized the mortgage appraisal process, developing elaborate, uniform procedures to assess whether a particular loan should be granted. The rationalization began with the development of a series of

³³ Thomas Shapiro, Brandeis University, *Hidden Costs of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality*.

so-called "Residential Security Maps," by which cities were divided up into neighborhoods to be rated according to their desirability. A central aspect of the rating system was that it was based not only on the quality of the housing present on the property but also explicitly on the socioeconomic, on ethnic, and *especially on racial characteristics of the neighborhood residents*.

Use of non-housing criteria in the appraisal process did not originate with the HOLC, but both in scope and in detail, the agency's revisions were unprecedented. Private financial institutions incorporated the new rating system in their own appraisals, thereby beginning the widespread institutionalization of the practice known as "red-lining." This practice institutionalized anti-black bias in the appraisal system. Homes in predominantly black neighborhoods to this day do not appreciate at the same rate as similar homes in predominantly white neighborhoods.³⁴

While there is no doubt that the FHA and VA greatly facilitated the extension of home ownership to millions of American families, the agencies have also been reasonably accused of racial bias. For example, *the FHA's 1939 Underwriting Manual openly recommended the use of racial restrictive covenants, that is, clauses in housing deeds prohibiting the occupancy of the structure in question by a black family*. Although the Supreme Court ruled that such covenants were unconstitutional in 1948 (*Shelley v. Kraemer*), the FHA did not implement the ruling until 1950. *The FHA and VA monitored and predicted the residential patterns of blacks, using the information to refuse insurance to neighborhoods on a wholesale basis by redlining. Not until 1966 did the agencies back off from their use of redlining by making funds increasingly available in low-rated neighborhoods, as well as lessening its credit-worthy requirements, thereby improving the odds that black applicants would obtain mortgages.*

³⁴ Cite NPR Chicago Housing report c. 27 FEB 08

With the advent of the modern Civil Rights Movement and widespread urban unrest in the mid-to-late-1960s, public awareness of the federal government's culpability in fostering urban decay and racial segregation in housing was heightened. One important outcome was the eventual passage of the fair housing legislation in 1968 at the federal level, which outlawed racial discrimination in the purchase or rental of housing. Access to home ownership is in part responsible for the rise of the black middle class.

In the 1980's and early 1990's, the results of several studies of which were widely-reported and commented on in the press, asserted that the likelihood that black applicants would be denied a mortgage exceeded the likelihood among otherwise identical white applicants, and that prospective black home owners, even those with relatively high incomes, continued to encounter discriminatory treatment from real estate agents. The Federal Reserve clamped down, in one case refusing to allow the merger of two banks because one of the banks (Shawmut, in Boston) was accused of discriminating against black mortgage applicants.³⁵ Lingering attitudes of excessive risk and outright prejudice continue to hamper black advancement, even for those who are in a financial position to benefit the lenders and sellers.

Such persistent housing discrimination is one example of systemic, structural anti-black racism. The racialized context has crossed over to create a negative impact on the persons identified as minority. Much of that overt mistreatment has been halted through law and by policy, yet vestiges of these same practices remain in business and in government environments today. To whatever cause we attribute the circumstance of relatively low black wealth, the empirical reality is that the median income for a black family is \$8,000 less per year than a white

³⁵ William Collins and Robert Margo of Vanderbilt University, "Race and Home Ownership, 1900-1990." Except for rewriting to match my prose style, italicizing and adding commentary to the historical details, the five paragraphs used as an example here are a paraphrased summary of Collins and Margo's writing.

family.³⁶ Both groups are moving up. However, declaring by law that “discrimination in housing and loans will stop now” maintains the significant economic lead imputed to members of the dominant culture. The example shows how old attitudes and practices have a continuing impact after they have been abolished—if indeed they have been abolished.

Academic Divide

Besides social and economic differences, disparity in perception and in treatment of African American students continues to be revealed pronouncedly in academic settings. If Herrnstein and Murray’s *The Bell Curve* analysis were to be accepted, the section title could read *intelligence* gap rather than academic.³⁷ Business, government, and academic factors are, of course, related to each other. And society-wide negative movement in one area usually means a downward trend in the others. For many black undergraduates, including those attending the nation’s military academies, cultural differences are exacerbated by other factors such as:

- Restricted exposure to the knowledge of the best programs
- Social discomfort with intercultural exchange and close proximity with “others”
- Lack of academic preparation
- Weak secondary programs
- Lack of money
- First generation in college
- Lack of counselor support

In contrast to the early centuries of U.S. history, there now is a black middle class whose members bypass many of these barriers. According to one report, wartime U.S. military enlistees are better educated, wealthier, and more rural on average than their civilian peers.

³⁶ US Census, 2006. The annual household income for all Americans is \$48,201; for black Americans, the figure was \$40,489, 84% of what white families take in, which is well above the median. This disparity is, however, an improvement over the 2004 discrepancy wherein black households earn merely 63% of white households.

³⁷ Herrnstein and Murray 276-280. The researchers argued against ineffective policies that assumed that black intellectual capacity was equal to white intellectual capacity. Their studies showed that “A person with the white mean [IQ] was at the 91st percentile of the black distribution.

Recruits have a higher percentage of high school graduates and representation from Southern and rural areas. Also, there is no evidence indicating exploitation of racial minorities (either by race or by race-weighted ZIP code areas). Finally, the distribution of household income of recruits is noticeably higher than that of the entire youth population.

In the study, each recruit's household income was approximated by using the median household income of his or her hometown ZIP code. Household income of recruits in 2004 and 2005 came primarily from middle-class areas. Poor areas are proportionally underrepresented in the wartime years 2003–2005. Although several years showed an overrepresentation of blacks in the Army, by the end of 2005, recruitments for black soldiers were close to the representation in the population.³⁸

Despite the economic and educational caltrops, a black middle class is emerging. Much notice in the press attended racially-charged clashes in the 1960's and 1970's. During the same years Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin King, Jr. were mobilizing their followers, a black middle class was developing that had a little money, homes, and decent education comparable to their non-black peers. The black middle class is continuing to grow. "To be black in the U.S. is no longer to be subordinate—not necessarily. The national effort to give blacks a more equitable share of the nation's goods and benefits has had results—uneven but undeniable. Increasingly, blacks are seen in offices of corporations and banks, in classrooms of elite colleges, and in officers' clubs."³⁹ Yet accrual of money and education has not removed the vestiges of negative black stereotypes developed over hundreds of years.

In fact at West Point, over the last twenty years, black cadets continue to graduate at an average rate approximately six percent lower than the rest of the United States Corps of Cadets;

³⁸ Kane, 1-2

³⁹ "America's Rising Black," 2

some years that difference has been as much as twenty-two percent. On a purely material level, failing to eradicate this difference means that the Army is unable to capitalize on the significant money it invests in educating a cadet for leadership. It costs nearly \$60,000 per year to educate each cadet; thus, the Army needs each cadet to not only graduate, but ideally those graduates would serve more than the minimum five year obligation. Retaining graduates would allow that investment to provide an acceptable yield.

More importantly, a consistently lower graduation rate among black cadets leads to a reduced number of available lieutenants for promotion in the higher officer ranks, thus ensuring that disparities in the upper ranks will remain, and perhaps widen. This situation makes it even more difficult for the Army to pursue equitable treatment for black soldiers and officers since too few officers will be available to represent those soldiers' and officers' concerns. It also limits adequate mentoring for young black officers coming through the ranks looking for role models to help them as they navigate the professional and exclusive domain that is the Army's commissioned leadership journey.⁴⁰ Black officers do not necessarily need black officers as mentors for the military aspects of commissioned service. Ideally, any senior with professional expertise could mentor any subordinate. Young black officers *would* benefit from having black seniors mentor them through the social aspects of career life, for as long as society remains racialized. Pitfalls may otherwise await the untutored.

As one of the interviewees, Kevin Huggins, described, getting into college was like feeling his way in the dark. "My counselor never suggested any stretch schools. In fact, he only hinted that I should apply to local state schools." Such faint endorsements by well-meaning educators are common for a couple of known reasons: Teachers and counselors understand when their program has not prepared their graduates—even for ones at the top of the class like

⁴⁰ Knotts, 3

Huggins—for college-level work. Another reason is that some counselors—including those of color—expect mediocrity or less from their students of color.

Sometimes counselors are trying to set their graduates up for success the best way that they know how. If students are under prepared for college, and then go away from their supportive home community to attend college, they often stop attending undergraduate courses by the third semester. A majority of those who drop out of college do not return to post-secondary education; their fears of inadequacy and lack of acceptance have been realized. Many do not have a back-up plan. To preclude this type of failure and economic dead-ending, counselors may recommend vocational or technical school--or nothing at all. Blackness and brownness have become so linked with academic mediocrity so strongly that black students are left with a difficult choice: they can try to achieve as scholars, fully aware that they were expected to fail, or they could opt out of academics and accept their roles as dunces and trouble-makers.⁴¹

Such narratives about black hopelessness can lack substance until they are personified by genuine experiences. Speaking with commissioned officers and candidates for commissioning reveals common elements affecting individual persons of color matriculating West Point with the intent of earning a commission as officers of the United States Army. Let the discussion begin with the senior respondent, Lieutenant colonel (Retired) H. Minton Francis.

Case Study—H. Minton Francis' West Point Class of 1944

Departing New York City on a hot 1st day of July in 1941, Minton Francis took the train to south dock to report for plebe summer camp. Born December 23, 1922, Francis was 18 years old, and already an undergraduate veteran.⁴² When he stepped off the train at South dock at

⁴¹ Cose, *Color Blind* 51

⁴² 2000 *Register* 114

West Point, his welcome to the Academy was rendered by an upperclassman on the stairwell from the train station. At the top of the stairwell, the two men met. The waiting cadet spoke first: “Why the hell would niggers want to come to West Point?”

“Damned if I know,” responded cadet candidate Francis to the first cadet he encountered. Then he marched boldly up the hill toward the barracks with the rest of the new cadets.

During the decades from 1860 through 1920, conditions for American blacks *might* have produced a far-reaching national shame at routine violations of the U.S. Constitution. Instead, the period produced the separate-but-equal Jim Crow laws that completely subjugated entire segments of the population based on physical appearance. It was in this negative aura that Francis began his life, and he responded with a feisty vigor to the challenge of being black in America, including being a black cadet at West Point.

Francis admits that he had the record for number of hours walking punishment tours on the central formation area. Every Wednesday afternoon and every weekend Saturday after inspection was spent walking in dress uniform with a weapon, marching countless back and forth lengths of the tarmac in an attempt to break his will and entice him to quit, as the other two blacks who entered with him had done. Francis’ entire plebe year was spent on the area (Francis interview). His revelation of this fact is casual, off-hand, as if everybody under his circumstances should have expected the same treatment.

Being forced to run around the breakfast formation as a new cadet before he was formally in the Cadet Corps (“Bring out the niggers!”), and being hazed until he collapsed *after* he was admitted were part of the pattern of mistreatment that stiffened Francis’ resolve, increased his ire, and changed his faith. In the former case, New Cadet Francis and the other two black cadets who had arrived at cadet basic training were required to run around the formation in uniform

until they were sweaty and unkempt. Afterward, they were given demerits and asked why they stank. That treatment was enough to break the will of the other two black cadets, and they quit after a few days. Francis stayed.

Barely mitigated prejudice met nearly irresistible will when Francis joined the Long Gray Line. Finishing the war-shortened three-year experience at West Point would have been a marvel for most people under the stress that Francis faced. At one point during his third-class (sophomore) summer training, Francis discovered that someone had delivered fresh feces in the boots he had left in his tent.

Finishing in the middle of his class of 474 was a creditable accomplishment. A drive to finish what he starts came, in part, from Francis' parents, who had a vision of a positive future for him. They prepared him well for it. They also supported him with letters and visits while he was a cadet. Francis was also able to tap the conscience of those cadets around him who were willing to be influenced by his persistence, rational resistance, and his professionalism. Francis felt compelled to counter the constant pressure to quit before graduating by publicly and gratefully acknowledging the goodwill and encouragement of more than a few of his classmates, forbearance and leniency of several key leaders of the classes of 1942 and 1943, and the benevolence of a perceptive, Commandant of Cadets. Without the compassion of these men it would most likely have been impossible for Francis to survive the malicious connivance of the "malefactors and hooligans" mentioned above. His gentlemanly sense of honor keeps him from naming even today those few classmates whom he remembers who, regardless of possible ostracism by other classmates or punitive action by upperclassmen, demonstrated their moral courage by befriending him. Some offered discreet words of secret encouragement. Some

performed clandestine acts of kindness. Cadets from the tent next to him would slip over to him comics from the Sunday paper, and other things that might lighten his thoughts at summer camp.

This burden of change came out of necessity based on his singular position as a black man in the Corps of Cadets, but the success was also catalyzed by a vision for historical importance and a sense of victory implanted by the group of adult leaders well before Francis reached West Point. His understanding of his role as a man on a mission was evident from his early admonishment to the two other black new cadets not to quit to his hours under the foot-well of his desk studying until the small hours. Rational people watching such effort at close range would be able to set aside nurtured notions of black laziness or black inability. The dissonance resulted in the type of support, alternately surreptitious and boldly open, that Francis experienced.

Prior to his acceptance to West Point, He was such a strong student at Dunbar High School that Francis was accepted without examination to the University of Pennsylvania, where he was accepted without examination. He studied there for two years. He was especially proficient at English and foreign language, especially French and German.

While at the University of Pennsylvania, Minton Francis was the stroke of the freshman crew team—he was the rower who set the tempo for the other rowers in the boat. The crew of eight in his shell was competitive, and won the championship by defeating rival Rutgers University. The victory brought with it an automatic invitation for the most competitive varsity rowers to join the fraternity that all the senior rowers were in, and accordingly, Francis got his invitation. When he stepped around the corner at the fraternity house at Penn and presented his credentials—a written invitation to rush the fraternity Sigma Chi, where members of the crew team were all expected to join. He stepped around the corner of the building with his

credentials—an invitation to pledge the fraternity. After one look, Francis was told to come back, “perhaps another time.” Another time was long decades away for black Americans.

H. Minton Francis graduated on D-Day, 1944. When he started his career, Francis was the fourth black officer commissioned from the U.S. Military Academy in the 20th century. As difficulties with his peers and seniors at West Point show, his distinction as one of the few blacks seeking commission was not lauded by everybody in the military; after officer basic training at Fort Sill Oklahoma, Francis was relegated to an officer holding pool in Florida after he pinned on his gold-plated 2nd Lieutenant bars. Still, he stayed on duty for twenty years, retiring as a lieutenant colonel.

His strong sense of duty kept Francis in the military. When WWII began, he was a pre-med student at the University of Pennsylvania. His brusque and distant father put an abrupt end to his medical career with the declaration: “You’re going to West Point!” Francis denies that he was conscious of his part of an historic movement to show that blacks were the equal of whites in America. His determination was far more the result of his personality—he was just stubborn.

Francis’ personal determination was marked by his multiple successful positions in the military, in entertainment, politics, and education. What kept Francis pressing on as a uniformed public servant was his direct knowledge of the pressing need to be active in the reduction of unjust anti-black discrimination. There was work to be done, and he had the knowledge and the resources of time, money, and energy to do that work.

A profound, life-changing religious faith has buoyed Francis up in tougher times and spurred him on in gentler times. He relates a compelling story about how the cadets who claimed to be Christian in the protestant customs that Francis was raised in showed little evidence of understanding brotherly love. Those Catholic cadets acted more like Christians were

the ones that, by their actions, caused Francis to investigate that faith. Ultimately, Francis was such a faithful exemplar that he was inducted into the prestigious Order of Malta.

ContraCulture

Part of social nurturing is the passing along of attitudes. Teachers and professors are typically the purveyors of society's cultural capital—what is considered important, and who is considered important. According to French Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the educational system is the principal institution controlling the allocation of status and privilege in contemporary societies.⁴³ Based on extensive surveys conducted in 1963 and 1968, Bourdieu argued that cultural practices and preferences in art, including literature, paintings, and music, are closely linked to educational level and the specific economic conditions one is born into. Cultural practices concerning human differences and preferences in human social interactions are defined and accentuated by differences in taste.⁴⁴ What is tasteful is determined by those with enough economic power to set standards. These persons need not worry about necessities of food and shelter, and tend to be exposed to the code of pure aesthetics because they have more disposable time to invest in art and entertainment. They can afford to be picky. Those exposed to the code develop and perpetuate that code, either purposefully or inadvertently, and thereby promote and continue a strong sense of separation from and elevation above persons with less privilege and fewer resources.

With respect to art, for example, untutored commoners lack cultural competence to identify intended and unintended secondary meanings—they cannot determine what is valuable. An unfortunate corollary is that the masses can rarely themselves be considered of great value.

⁴³ Swartz, 189

⁴⁴ Bourdieu, *Distinction* Chapter 5

In short, according to Bourdieu, lack of aesthetic codes or access to these codes legitimizes social differences—essentially locking them in place. Those with taste set critical standards for what having taste means, and proper evincing of taste predictably excludes those who lack the birthright or education to attain suitable trappings of aesthetic development. That lack of education leads to more than aesthetic consequences. For some black cadets entering West Point or the Army, something as straightforward as the lack of cultural codes for dress or speech sets them up for failure. Others who are middle class still must contend with the perception that they do not have taste because they do not understand the cultural norms.

In fairness, this cultural hierarchy is not a wholly passive and unmarked endeavor. Not everybody who is privileged accepts the cultural hierarchy. And some who lack the trappings of privilege also contend with the established rankings. That leads to a further discussion of mobility in American society—mobility for black males, in particular.

Extending the Bourdieu position graphically may be helpful. The ContraCultural model below is a visual representation of the high correlation between economic status and race categories (as defined by the U.S. Government in census documents).⁴⁵ It also represents relative power in the United States society, including the power to decide what has merit in terms of value and aesthetics.⁴⁶ This is a descriptive model of the whole society, not a predictive model. The model deliberately essentializes cultural and economic aspects of American society for the purpose of this discussion.

The model below graphically describes mobility for people of color in America. The scale is a familiar X-Y scale. Moving up vertically indicates an increase in wealth. Moving

⁴⁵ Racial categories in current U.S. Census records are American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White. “Some Other Race” was added in the 2000 Census. Respondents may select more than one choice. The qualifiers Hispanic or Latino may apply to any race.

⁴⁶ Pierre Bourdieu’s treatise *Distinction* on determining aesthetic worth and David Schwarz’s commentary on cultural capital help explain how cultural capital is passed by designated purveyors such as professors and social guides.

along the X-axis to the right indicates increasing identification as or with people of color. From any point in the three zones Z, Y, and X within the twin circles, moving up and to the left indicates an increase in net worth and an accordant decrease in pigmentation. That correlation is well established in the United States with each new census, though the black middle class is growing. Emblematic of this high correlation of income to race is that 88% of all Americans in the top 5% of income levels identified as white. Overall households headed by African Americans or Hispanics, the two largest sub-groups in the United States at 12.8% and 14.4% respectively—are underrepresented in the top two quintiles, and are overrepresented in the bottom two economic quintiles. The reverse representation is true for white Americans.⁴⁷ A driving assumption is that those with greater wealth determine political and social capital—what matters in the country.

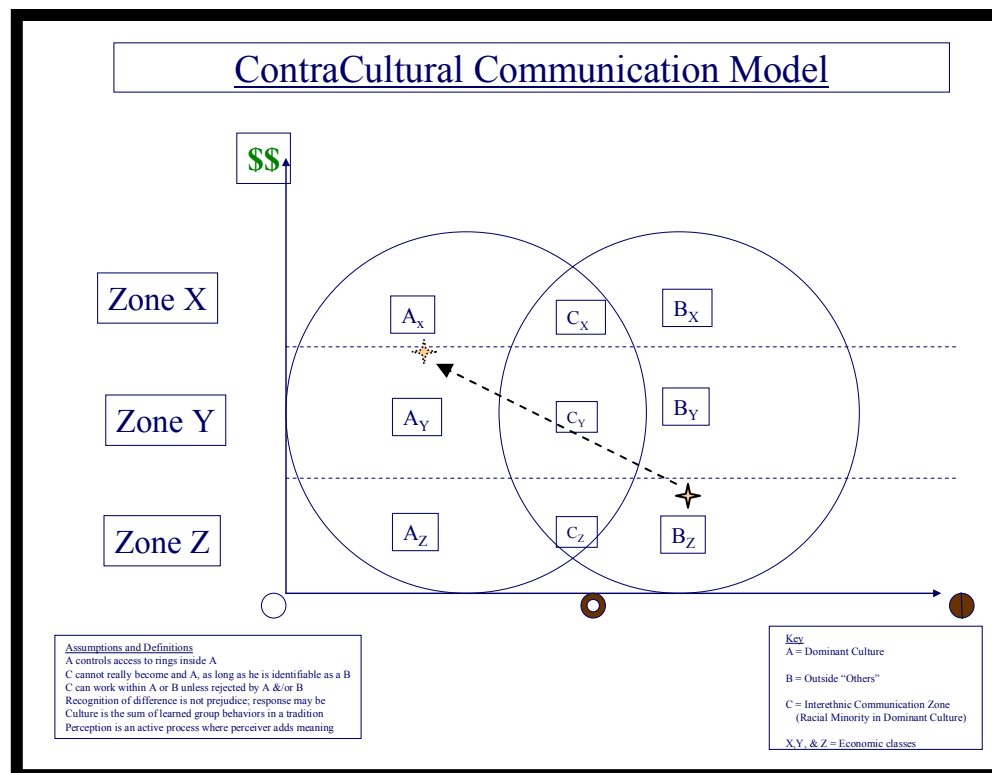


Figure 4. ContraCultural Model

The point of the graphic is this: even though financial opportunities are more open to people of color in contemporary America, there is still enough racial friction that most cannot yet take advantage of that opportunity. Those in the left ring have the privilege of appropriating the

⁴⁷ US Census Bureau data, 2006.

manners of those on the right. Those on the right still cannot move all the way to the top left without running through a gauntlet of gate-keepers. And once situated in A_x , such people are singled out as exceptional for their race, or worse, as models for every person of color could do if they applied themselves. Both perspectives are damaging.

Lack of sufficient income among black families to fund education and under-representation in college has led to an under-representation in the commissioned officer ranks. The Army has made successful efforts to address the funding issue with scholarships to Reserve Officer Training Corps and full scholarships to West Point; in fact West Point often garners more than its proportional share of highly-qualified black freshmen, given the numbers qualified applicants available and the competition among quality of schools to attract them.

Other factors that military leaders can manage remain partially obscured in the dialogue about cultural and racial minorities because these topics seem to be too sensitive to be addressed openly. Just as frequently, leaders consider the subject of real or perceived racial prejudices to be minor and previously resolved. Since racial issues were settled by the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960's, Army leaders may dismiss race-based complaints that do arise as uncommon, unsubstantial, or inconsequential. Given the potential cost to the military of unresolved tensions, complaints of this sort are deserving of continued attention.

Case Study: Tod Etheredge, West Point Class of 1986

A representative experience from a West Point graduate can help to reify the transition that a black male must undergo to fit in (to assimilate) with the dominant culture's expectations. The assimilation involves erasing large portions of black cultural markers and a dose of personal self-denial as well. The following is a narrative that presents the psychic costs of an unsuccessful attempt to assimilate.

Tod Etheredge served in a combat zone in Iraq, and then left the military at the end of his initial obligation. He is currently a commercial loan officer. Formerly a member of the West Point class of 1986, Tod invested himself in the military early, and considered making a career in the service. Ultimately, he did not stay. It wasn't racial tension that caused him to switch careers, but the treatment from a leader who recognized his proficiency with words and awards, but refused to prepare an accurate Officer Evaluation Report that matched his spoken words of high praise. Etheredge felt that his hard work and loyalty had not been requited, solely because he let people know he was considering his option to leave the military. Apparently, he recalls, his commander did not want to waste a valuable top rating on an officer who would be gone in a year.

If that type of betrayal was enough to gall Etheredge, the type and volume of offenses he was about to face in the civilian sector was perhaps more niggling:

Challenging every racially insensitive comment, improper gesture, uninformed opinion or other inappropriate action would be admittedly impractical and indeed impossible. Still, the barbs of each instance sting badly. Some are comical, but nonetheless disheartening. I am not immune to racial insensitivity. Individual stings are sometimes bearable, while others are onerous. Their cumulative effect is annoying. I have talked with many African-Americans on this subject. All agree the effects are emotionally injurious.⁴⁸

What Etheredge is describing is at least partly responsible for some symptoms experienced by blacks in our country. Mental health affects physical health. The social and psychological down-pressure on African Americans will eventually have a deleterious effect on black physical well-being. Etheredge continued to experience the same pernicious effects of racial presupposition when he entered the civilian workforce in the American Deep South.

⁴⁸ Etheredge Interview

Although Etheredge could not expect any particular relief for the types of indiscretions he suffered, he tries to express them for himself. He tried to recount certain trying incidents with limited success. In his words:

. . . [M]y inability to recapture the ordeals in print was more than writers' block. My problem was far more troubling. I had become tolerant. I have allowed the experiences to become a part of my daily routine. The instances of racial and social faux pas are so common that I allow them to exist without challenging each occurrence. Complying with [this] request would prove more challenging than I thought. I do not habitually catalog each described event. While many experiences are darkly humorous, I am passionate about all. They are like unremovable [sic] baggage, unnoticeable until confronting a new challenge in race relations. They then weigh unwantingly [sic] heavy upon me.

Tod describes his condition as having been socialized to tender a certain calm external response to emotionally injurious incidents that raise his anxiety. He is being forcibly assimilated into a culture that does not have to acknowledge his cultural origins or ethnic sensibilities while expecting him to fully understand and adopt the attitudes and behaviors of the culture he is entering. It's the asymmetry of the cultural exchange that carries much of the pressure. Both at West Point, and at his employment afterward, Tod Etheredge was ambushed.

Etheridge describes the name calling he experienced from his peers in elementary school:

Because I attended a predominantly black school for the first few years, moving to a predominantly white school was a cultural shift.

The first time he heard a racial slur, he was perplexed, both by the meaning of the words and by the unprovoked maliciousness behind the name calling. Etheredge had to ask questions of his parents about what was happening. His was a sobering conversation that many black parents in similar circumstances have to address in private, because the public conversation remains so muted over sensitive matters of race.

Avoiding this social and professional ambush scenario would require knowing which way the opponent is attacking. In a deliberate attempt to destroy opponents by surprise and

overwhelming firepower, opposing forces use an ambush, which has a variety of deadly forms. In the modified diagram, a small group of nine squad members has established an L-Shaped ambush, one of the most effective common forms of halting an opponent. The squad members are represented by black dots. From left to right, squad members are carefully positioned, starting with two automatic rifles and two fighting team leaders for controlling them. The squad leader is positioned at the best place to control the action, and is flanked by the grenadier. To attain the maximum damage on the opponent on the trail, fires are arranged to cross in the kill zone. Team B, the security team, keeps the ambush members from being surprised by an unexpected force coming from another direction. These things are all done with deliberate precision. Some of those pressures he experienced, and hints at the causes, are graphically presented in the ambush diagram below:

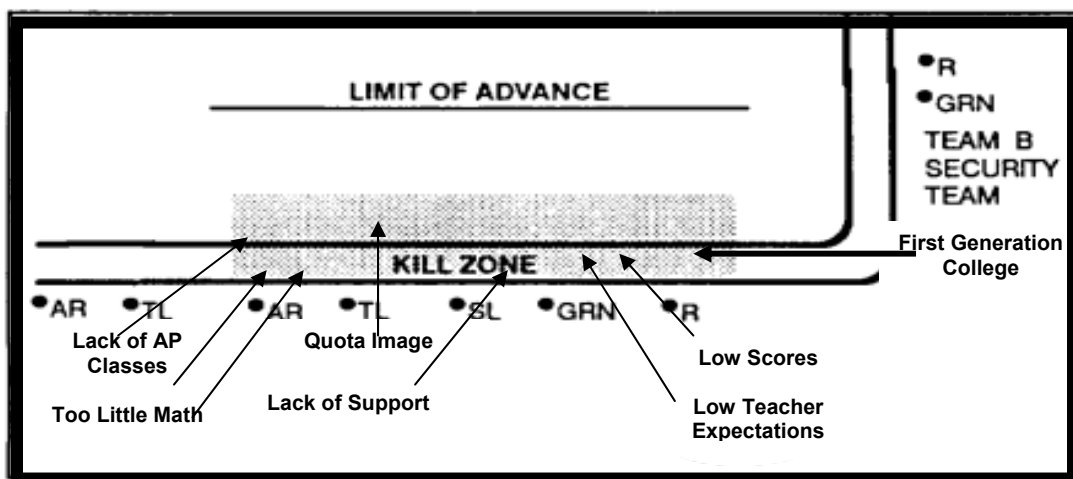


Figure 5. L-Shaped Ambush

For Etheredge, the challenges to his advancement came from unexpected directions, and were probably unwitting assaults against him. The acts were aided by his self-admitted naïveté.

. . . [W]hen I was in the sixth grade, my teachers, black and white, treated me with dignity and respect more often than not. Still, there were instances when my outward appearance influenced their interaction with me as with other African-American students.

The earliest and perhaps most subtle instances were little physical expressions shown young black boys by white teachers. I noticed limited tactile encouragement early in my adolescence, which delivered a clear tacit message. Boundaries existed between our races. Teachers meandering about classrooms would often give affirming pats to students. Little black boys rarely received pats of encouragement from white teachers.

Etheredge was precocious enough as a youth to notice the difference in treatment, but was not yet astute enough to understand the subtle but potent causes of the behavior. Developing coping skills to redress the lack of encouragement would have to wait until much later. As a professional in the finance community, the central emotion he evinced on a regular basis was frustration. Because of his visible difference and the low representation, Etheredge must continuously deal with what has come to be known as the *diversity tax*.

While I implore my white comrades to ask blacks for their opinions on racial issues, they inundate me with questions on the subject. Serving as one of a handful of blacks holding a professional position in our company only magnifies the effect. Sometimes I want to scream, "I know I am a black man! However, most of my interests lay outside issues of race! Friends, talk with me about other issues, please! And, get the opinions of other African-Americans or appropriate ethnic group on issues of race."

The diversity tax does not merely mean having to deal with race as the number one topic for discussion. It also means being the go-to person for the perceptions of the entire black community. That is quite a load for one person. Etheredge refers to this burden as he continues to describe his professional frustration.

My frustrations once surfaced in a comical response to an official of my company. That person asked me what the "black community" thought about a particular subject. I understood the innocence and nature of the question. However, while the official did not offend me, I was compelled to answer, "You know, we all gathered at my house last Thursday for pizza but forgot to discuss it."

He did not elaborate on the response by the official to his rejoinder that black people are not any more monolithic on politics or finances than any other group. Nor do they all get together after work and generate consensus. But humor, which often defuses tense situations, can often backfire and make the user seem frivolous or insulting. Using humor is a risk blacks often have

to take in situations where their culture is misunderstood, and expressions of frustration or anger would be counterproductive. The added weight of responsibility to be the sole source of black culture—interpreting black community to management—does not make Etheredge more productive, but takes his focus away from the company's core business:

My frustration centered on many of my white co-workers looking to me solely for advice on black issues. Most have never truly talked with blacks as evidenced in many of the comments that they have made to me and that I have shared in this composition. While I genuinely applaud the effort many make to communicate, the effort comes only because I have entered their domain. Serving in the very lonely position of a black person in corporate America has inherently availed me to share my convictions with them. They naturally seek my advice on race related matters, but my advice is only one piece of the puzzle.

The diversity tax also means that in addition to their other work, blacks find themselves on various hiring boards or additional duties that require diversity. Sometimes it is simply additional work in order to be noticed⁴⁹ These additional, often well-intended assignments can preclude blacks from succeeding, simply because of the energy it takes to do the additional work, and the greater time demands. Etheredge continues:

Unfortunately, many avoid contact with blacks. Whether the avoidance is purposeful or incidental, the effects are the same: perpetual misunderstanding and mutual additions to each other's bags. One co-worker shared an experience with me from his church. His congregation of about 2,500 has four black families. The remaining families are white. The co-worker, a person I especially like and respect, said, "I wanted to speak to one of the black families in my church, but I did not want to appear disingenuous." His intentions were sincere, but the results were still damaging. My friend asked for my advice. I assured him the family would respond like any other family, black or white. Everyone knows sincerity and appreciates it.

What Etheredge is describing—using humor to defuse a potentially tense situation-- is common among blacks when they are the sole minority in a group. Etheredge described using humor when his colleague asked about black opinions. Smiling or using humor to reduce tension or to mask pain has been experienced by enough black Americans that a renowned African

⁴⁹ Davis & Watson, 72-75

American poet penned a telling poem about how black people absorb the psychic cost in order to continue to function in the dominant society. Creating tension or responding with anger to circumstances is rarely beneficial to the minority. During the period of American slavery, punishment was severe; during the Nadir,⁵⁰ when Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem was published, vindictive extra-legal lynching was common.

We Wear the Mask

WE wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes, —
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask!⁵¹

Dunbar's 1896 poem emphasizes the subtle, yet constant tension that underlies even routine exchanges about racial conditions in America. Dunbar notes the use of fake smiles and coded terms in response to discrimination. Such falsity of personal expression increases internal dissonance, even while the mouthing of coded rebuttals achieves some small release of that tension. The poet also alludes to the core source of community support for black Americans during the Nadir period—the black community and the Bible. In both sources the hope for a

⁵⁰ The African American Nadir spans the year 1890-1905. During this period of American history, blacks were subjected to the worst collective social and legal treatment since periods of legalized slavery.

⁵¹ The above poem appeared in Dunbar's first professionally published volume, *Lyrics of Lowly Life*, in 1896 by Dodd, Mead, and Company

positive future was reinforced. Prolonged suffering of tortured souls was to be rewarded after death, according to popular church teachings.

Today, humor remains a ready tool for reducing racial tensions. Retribution for creating racial discomfort is more subtle in contemporary exchanges, but no less harmful to the individual psyche than in the past. In candid discussions about race, including equal opportunity policy, affirmative action efforts, and especially those conversations about perceived or actual racial discrimination or prejudice, along with feelings of empathy, interlocutors often experience a sense of pity for victims, defensiveness for themselves, or anger about the unresolved situation. Etheredge is correct that most people appreciate sincerity as a quality in others. But everyone does not manifest sincerity in interpersonal relationships, and that contributes to unnecessary misunderstanding.

Case Study: Kevin Huggins, West Point Class of 1986

Colonel Kevin P. Huggins is a 1986 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy. Born in Chicago, he was raised in Louisville Kentucky, right up to the point where he departed for the Military Academy.

Huggins was second in his graduating class at Seneca High School. Despite this high ranking, his high school counselor mentioned only the local state schools as possibilities for pursuing an undergraduate degree. There was no mention of applying to a range of schools or applying for a stretch program outside of the local area that would challenge his intellect and open greater educational opportunity. Huggins recalls the session in some detail, but chose not to speculate what might have been at the root of the limited suggestions for furthering his education. Even though he had higher educational aspirations, West Point was not a part of his personal deliberations as a potential destination. Here is his account:

One day during my senior year, I got a call to come to the office. I was wondering what I had done. When I arrived, there was me, and three other guys—all students of color. A military Academy outreach officer talked to us about attending West Point. He left us with some materials to fill out, and that was it. I did not bother to fill mine out or send in the card to start a file, because I was not interested in going to a remote military school. But that outreach officer persisted. Finally, after four calls asking why I had not yet sent in the interest form, I filled it out, just to keep him from calling me back. The next thing I knew, I got a call at home from the local congressman's office. The staffer said that none of the nominees from the district would be accepted to West Point, but that if I chose to accept a nomination, I would be admitted. It wasn't until years later that I realized that I was supposed to seek out a congressional nomination in order to be nominated. As it turned out, the nomination sought me.

According to Army Accessions and West Point Admissions officers, African-American males were, and continue to be, the most difficult demographic group to attract to the military.

As a capable high school student, Huggins was the target of the West Point Admissions Committee because the Military Academy was actively seeking cultural diversity in the entering classes, so that the commissioned officer corps would look more like the blend of citizens in the enlisted ranks, which more closely resembles the society at large. Driving the press for more officers of color in the commissioned ranks were several hypotheses: a more inclusive officer corps would help to eliminate the perception that people of color could not aspire to the highest ranks in the Army, and that soldiers of color would be motivated by seeing people that looked like them in the upper ranks. And, since the general officers at the top of the profession start as lieutenants at the entry level, a larger proportion of under-represented groups would yield a larger pool to choose from when selecting the most senior leaders twenty and thirty years later.

Huggins is a senior military leader now, capable, hard-working, and in demand for his varied talents in teaching, in computer science, foreign language, assessing engineering programs, and organizing challenging international liaisons between academics. Upon entering West Point, he came with several working hypotheses of his own. Recall that when he was first

called to the office with the other students of color, he went in assuming that he was going to be accused of some offense. Anticipating trouble is natural for any student when called to the front office—but the call places more stress on a black student because of the history of false accusations. Even though he had a clear conscience and a keen mind, Huggins said:

I figured West Point was for smart people. I felt like I wasn't smart enough. Academic work has always been fairly easy for me—I think I have my father's intellectual acumen for school work. But I wasn't really committed to staying at West Point. I was just looking for the first two years there. In fact, the first few months reinforced the idea that I couldn't do anything right. As a guy who was accustomed to succeeding whenever I applied myself to a task or set to work on a goal, having guys yelling corrections at me for every little thing was different than what I was used to. It was certainly different than what I wanted from a college experience. So I took every occasion to get away from West Point. I joined the band so that I could travel even as a plebe, and spent an unusually high number of weekends away.

Professor Claude Steele, Stanford University social psychologist, elaborated on Higgins' self-expectations in his description of stereotype threats. Steele argues compellingly for the existence of an internal defeatist personal paradigm. Steele proffers the concept of *stereotype threat*.

At a 2007 lecture at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, the Stanford professor outlined the concept that “is key to achieving integration of our society that goes beyond statistics and allows people to flourish in an integrated setting.”⁵² A person's “social identity”—defined as group membership in categories such as age, gender, religion, and ethnicity—has significance when “rooted in concrete situations.” Professor Steele defines these situations as “identity contingencies”—settings in which a person is treated according to a specific social identity.

... [When a] person's social identity is attached to a negative stereotype, that person will tend to underperform in a manner consistent with the stereotype. Underperformance is due to a person's anxiety that he or she will conform to the negative stereotype. The anxiety manifests itself in various ways, including distraction and increased body temperature, all of which diminish performance level.⁵³

⁵² Claude Steele, Mount Holyoke Address, September 2004.

⁵³ *ibid*

This self-defeating attitude is part of the collective American attitude that must be adjusted, because allowing it to remain hurts productivity and wastes talent, just as lingering anger can. One of the purposes of this argument is to point out that the anger exists among minority officers who do not sense they are allowed full participation in the work of the organization. The offense is often felt in the form of tokenism.

Referring to Ralph Ellison's 1952 novel *Invisible Man*, a representation of blacks in America as transparent spooks, Shelby Steele, Stanford University researcher and author, opines that invisibility and white blindness to the black plight create significant rage in black Americans who "demand to be seen and treated as human beings."⁵⁴ He includes himself as a person suffering that rage, even though his voice is one of those being heard, a fact that might allow for some venting and relief. Consider the frustrated anger of persons of color who cannot be heard for fear of sabotaging their careers. As Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem indicates, it is not always obvious which people are masking frustration, only to have it take its toll in some somatic or future verbal or physical outburst.

Cultural sensitivity creates cooperation and goodwill; a lack of it creates animosity that makes neutral persons angry and resistant.⁵⁵ One source of anger and pain for African American officers and would-be officers is *structural racism*. Structural racism is part of the reason why "crime, incarceration, poverty, underachievement in school, and the disintegration of the family – disproportionately afflict blacks."⁵⁶ There is more—higher incidents of physical ailments and shorter life spans are also out of proportion with the rest of the American population. Attributing the ills of blacks to a single cause oversimplifies a historically intractable, gorgon-like challenge

⁵⁴ *White Guilt*, 138

⁵⁵ Knotts, 111

⁵⁶ Bedey, 1

that requires a sophisticated array of remedies; diversity programs are not, by themselves, adequate. Programs are necessary to promote a shift from merely tolerating to fully valuing people who are culturally distinctive.

Racism is in the decline. But race-related phenomena do help account for disparities among cultural groups in educational accomplishment, business success, or military achievement. A host of other factors coincide with structural racism, including stereotype threat, personal bias, and under-prepared candidates. The array of factors might best be addressed by an array of responses that employ leaders, peers, and some work by the individuals experiencing the pressure. Continuing, though diminished, racist practices are among several factors that create the reality of undesirable working conditions that are part of a daily reality for many African American males. Even when perception of offenses is exaggerated due to hypersensitivity, life conditions are changed—usually for the worse, by being visible identified as black. In this way—by perceptions—individuals who adopt a victim mentality look for offense, and therewith create a reality that lowers their quality of life. Those parts of a contrived or overblown racist reality need to be eliminated. But all offenses are not contrived.

Structural racism can be observed in some of its several manifestations. It is born and bred in the mentality of a people through denigrating words and belittling images. The belief of racial superiority and the associated separations and condescension that goes with it, are promulgated in witting and unwitting policies, which is the second level of structural racism. To deny that loans are more expensive for black people, that jobs are being withheld because of skin color, and that grades have been depreciated due to lowered expectations for people of color would be counter to verifiable evidence. Quality of life has improved so drastically for blacks in

the last fifty years that comparatively, it may appear that all necessary work has been done. That would be a misreading of the American racial situation.

Professor Steele's research confirms that while some racism still exists, stereotype threat is a far more pervasive barrier to a truly integrated society. According to Steele, a person's fear of being negatively stereotyped according to race—whites as racist, blacks as intellectually inferior, for example—creates a general level of discomfort in racially mixed settings.⁵⁷ This situational dependent down-pressure based on lowered expectations creates an added burden to African American undergraduates that manifests itself as depreciated academic work, worsened social interactions, and decreased physical health. Lower expectations can be externally generated, by teacher miscues. Low expectations may be internally created by persons who *believe* they will be judged as less capable performers. The result is that those with lower expectations either give less effort in the first case, or try to hard in the second case. Both circumstances result in matching the expectation of lowered performance.

When asked about the pressures of life at West Point that he was escaping, Huggins continued:

It was a cultural shift, yes, but more than the military culture, which most of us were experiencing, there was a social adjustment, too. For example, majority cadets could turn the volume up on their music, and others would enjoy that rock and country. It wasn't too appealing to me, but I didn't say anything. On the other had, when my music could be heard beyond my desk, it was considered "noise," and I had to turn it down. It's not that people were mean to me—they weren't—there was just a benign lack of cultural sensitivity, an expectation that everybody would like what the majority likes.

As both Etheredge and Huggins mention in their experiences, if the person experiencing these negative feelings is a person in power, the negative feelings are attributed to person bringing on the discomfiture ("If you were not here, I would not feel this way"). The source of ill feelings can hardly expect to fare well at the next performance review, even if the issue of race is not

⁵⁷ Steele, Holyoke College Address 2004

specifically mentioned. Safer for people of color to mask the hurt and continue to be assimilated rather than risk the alternatives of marginalization or dismissal. It is the existence and repression of common, unresolved anger that needs attention from Army leaders.

The United States Army needs minority talent. The U.S. Army is experiencing a dearth of African American officers in the combat arms specialties, and has an overall shortage of African American officers to help lead its increasingly diverse force. Given the nature of the all-volunteer force and the continuing need to recruit and retain talented officers, Army leaders need to identify conditions which discourage African Americans from serving the country as commissioned officers in the U.S. Army. We can better understand how systemic language, professional culture, and leader perceptions factor into acceptance and success for contemporary African American officer candidates, cadets, midshipmen and officers. Once Army leaders better understand the nature of the challenge, they can implement policies and practices that mitigate the paucity of under-represented minorities and allow talented African Americans to thrive professionally. Another black man seeking an Army commission describes how he copes with anger he experiences while in training.

Case Study: Randall Chasten West Point Class of 2008

Randall Chasten was born in 1983. Long Beach California was his birthplace, but he was raised in Riverside by his grandfather Herb Sydney Chasten, an independent man who gouged his own trail through life. This was the adult who most taught Chasten how to be a man. A man, by definition, is a husband who cares for his wife in a way that allows the wife to take direct care of the children. Essentially, his was a traditional some would say archaic, sense of the male bread winner as head of household, a pattern that eluded Randy in his own young life. Still, Chasten was in church five nights per week. His father was a preacher, and his grandfather was

a deacon. One part of the training for manhood from these two men of faith that stayed with him was the requirement to maintain personal integrity; the concept of being a man of his word was non-negotiable.

In his words, “all I did was play sports” while at Seneca High School—football and track. His tenure at West Point was completely influenced by his role as the free safety for the Army football team. At the time of this writing Randy Chasten anticipated graduating from West Point in June of 2008. He had attended one year of state college in South Carolina. He had attended a year at the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School, and because of his performance, was retained at West Point for an additional year to meet graduation criteria. A double major now in Spanish and Geography, Chasten had been selected for the Army flight program, where he will begin his training at Fort Rucker Alabama flying rotary wing aircraft.

Chasten likes to “blaze his own path,” a trait he admired in his paternal grandfather. He was underprepared for college work, and his grades were terrible in his first semester at the Military Academy. He was an archetypal college jock, counting on his athleticism to make up for a lack of effort in the classroom. While football was buoying him up in that seminal plebe year, an encounter with an upper-class cadet resulted in an altercation that included an exchange of angry threats and an administrative restraining order to keep Chasten and his tormentor apart. Chasten was unaccustomed to and unwilling to respond positively to peers who had not earned his respect. He was positively unwilling to do so. That encounter was a uniform drill, where a senior cadet requires a subordinate cadet to dash up the stairs his room, don one of the seventeen different uniforms issued to each cadet, and then return within minutes to the formation area outside. Usually the time allotted is far too short to allow a cadet to make the change successfully. Chasten returned deliberately disheveled in his woolen full dress uniform. His

white cross belts, his tall tar-bucket hat, and his collars and cuffs were all in complete disarray. His was a willful act of defiance which came just short of blows. Chasten's recalcitrance could have been enough to end his career aspirations.

Instead, Chasten used the incident to learn that he should "lead how he wanted to be led." He also learned, through his own experience and that of other cadets he observed, that "blacks tend to overreact" whenever issues of race emerge, even when those issues are merely *perceived* offenses of disrespect. Rather than calmly settle a difference, "there has to be some drama—some raving or threatening." In his own plebe case, Chasten overreacted and threatened to fight the senior cadet. But the pressure had been building for months—or years. Chasten felt culturally isolated among the white majority at West Point when he entered in 2003, even after a year at the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. He believes it was harder for all minorities to get along with white classmates because minorities had to learn the white culture, but the white cadets essentially ignored minority culture. Lack of personal respect and lack of cultural respect are recurring themes among the respondents interviewed for this study.

As an only child, Chasten felt like he was even less well prepared to integrate with a group. Despite his size—6'4", 220 pounds—he felt intimidated and fearful when he was around too many white cadets. The fear was not of physical threats, but of distrust of the intentions of others. This attitude of suspicion was a conditioned emotional response developed from the time he was young, and lingered into adulthood. It is easy to see how starting off any interpersonal relationship with a basis of fear and mistrust of motives creates an obstacle that must be breached for genuine unit cohesion to occur.

Even with the vestiges of fear, and after seven years of undergraduate effort, Chasten still plans to pursue his goal of becoming an Army general officer. Chasten wants to remain for a career in the Army for a full career. Like Minton Francis, Chasten's sense of persistence came from his father's example. His sense of purpose was developed over the long period he sought his commissioning goal, in defiance of people who told him he could not succeed. It is unclear exactly where that kind of negative strength is developed, but certain strivers thrive on being told what they cannot do, and then working the negative thesis. Chasten would also confirm that he was strengthened and directed by a few close peers who helped him vent, and senior mentors who helped him productively redirect his passion.

A Hope and a Future

America is still a racialized society. Individuals are still identified by skin color. They are still noted for the flatness of the nose and the kink of the hair. The U.S. military will, for the foreseeable future, be composed of persons from that racialized society. This representational cross-sectioning of Americans in our volunteer force is the great advantage of our accession system. Still, as long as we are still counting "black firsts," we will know that we have yet to recover fully from the vestiges of second-class citizenship and inferiority from the recent past and distant past. Knowledge of that recent past is a help for the near future. This is a message of hope.

Just as Tod Etheredge points out in his interview, a couple of satisficing⁵⁸ alternatives have meant success for black officers in the way that the military indicates success: promotions and a chance to work to one's fullest potential in positions of increasing responsibility. He and the other respondents also make clear the psychic costs of the assimilation they endure. It is that

⁵⁸ *Satisficing* is a locally coined term at the Naval War College applied to indicate a compromise position that placates parties involved in a negotiation with an acceptable outcome without fully satisfying any of them.

psychic cost that continues to rob the U.S. military of potential talent, as some blacks avoid the service to avoid the pain, and some depart earlier than they or the Army would like because of the (remediable) pressures associated with being black in the officer corps.

Case Study: Terance Williams West Point Class of 2012

Cadet Candidate Williams is attending the United States Military Academy Preparatory School in Fort Monmouth New Jersey. Hailing from Lansing Michigan, this semester of schooling is as close as he has been to the uniformed service. His sense of duty and purpose is already quite keen. He knows what he expects from West Point, but the military life is still a distant thought. Williams said:

Originally, going to West Point came from knowing about this great opportunity. The Summer Leader Seminar last year was a fine experience—before that, I had no idea what USMA was about. After that, I saw myself going there and doing well there.

His expectations for success are high. He feels prepared, because his father was making him read novels like *To Kill a Mockingbird* when he was six years old, telling his son “You’re going to need that someday.” Sure enough, that novel was part of the curriculum at his high school in Lansing.

Williams understands how to give of himself to help others. Some of that sense of self-sacrifice comes from his mother. Faith was a means of coping with adversity. His mother always took the children to church, where Williams declared, “A lot of good stuff happened.” For example, at Christmas, instead of ripping open presents at home, the family would go with their mother to volunteer, handing out gifts to less fortunate people, or serving at the soup kitchen. Williams recollected that his mother taught him to get involved with community work from children’s ministry to politics. He noted that, “She dove head first, and took us all along. She always said: If you know how to do something, your kids should know how to do it, too.”

As a result, Williams can cook and could prepare a resume well before he ever needed one. Not surprisingly, Williams has a well-developed sense of duty.

If I just wanted to serve my country [in the military], I could enlist or go ROTC. It's the idea of what I can do for my country coupled with what West Point can do for me. If you look at Ivy League schools versus the service academies, it's like this: at a regular school, I would be paying big money listen to somebody famous and smart talk to me [as one member of a large group]. At West Point, they are investing in the individual. Plus, there's the name recognition among employers.

His dedication to country is tempered by the tradeoff of marketability after he has served honorably. It is a future view that is common among cadet candidates and new cadets. They consider what they'll be doing five and ten years hence. Still pressure from peers remains strong. Pressure to avoid military service typically came in the form of questioning: "Why would you want to join the Army? Don't you have to go to war?" It's the war that keeps black people from serving these days. They are afraid of dying over there.

For the moment, I am still motivated to join the Army. I am not really worried about dying. The threat of dying in a war doesn't bother me. In my family, we believe we have a higher probability of dying in a car wreck or a fire than in a war. War is dangerous, but those warriors are trained to do what they're doing. How I usually rationalize it is by what my mother says: I have a higher chance of getting shot in Detroit in crack house. I would rather go to another country and defend my family and my beliefs than have them come to my house and having my family having to pick up a gun and do their own defense.

Williams added that people really don't know enough about serving in the military. That fear of the unknown deters potential officers from joining.

If you think of Vietnam, you think of the disrespect and shell shock that vets came home with. Thinking of all those disrupted lives and dead bodies from that first televised war. These are not positive images. Plus in this war, people don't hear much about the good stuff that is being accomplished in Iraq. Too many negative connotations are associated with the Iraq experience.

Williams went on to expound on the possibilities of having a company like tobacco seller Phillip Morris take over Army advertising, reasoning that “if they can continue to successfully promote tobacco, which is more lethal than this war, they’d be excellent advocates for the U.S. Army, since they broke the code on marketing unpleasantness.”

When the subject turned to unpleasantness in his own experience, Williams offered:

I have had the experience of being the only black person in class. That happened in Math here—which matters and doesn’t matter. I am kind of used to being the only black person. It’s kind of funny. Really strange to me that it would happen here. I was the only black person in my English class, too. I am sure—well I hope it’s so—that the decision to have a class with one black in it is an unplanned accident. The pressure I feel is that others might expect me to jump up as the black rep and shout “That’s not true!” when they say something about African Americans.

Although he has not yet had to jump up and shout in defense of black conditions, Williams has had to cope with stress related to being a young black man in a predominantly white context.

I react to various racial pressures with humor. That’s what I do. For example, when I am at the movies, I often note aloud how blacks would have reacted differently—like when a white couple was leaving the police station slowly, and questioning why they had been released. A black guy and his girl would have been running away from that place as fast as possible. I turn it into fun, so that it eases the [race] tension. It puts off notions of black anti-white racism.

Williams points out a couple of things in his comments. One is that he, as the other respondents reported, has to be prepared to deploy humor to put his peers at ease when tensions mount. Another is that he is conscious of the differences in behavior between blacks and other cultural groups in a given social context, and that consciousness is foregrounded in a significant way. That is, he is constantly considering the multiple responses to given social stimuli in a way that his non-minority peers are not. He is, essentially, *thinking twice* much of the time.

I maintain a concern that others might be offended about what some might think are innocuous comments. Being called boy was one such incident. Context matters. A lot.

I try to make people conscious of that by using a lot of jokes. But whether we like it or not, there are certain things that we can and cannot say. It's hard to get everybody on the same page on these matters.

One incident, a white guy called me "boy." All the black guys around the table asked me if I was going to say something. I didn't respond at first, but the peer pressure was too much. Back in the hallway, I said, "Don't say that ever again." The response was "Oh, I didn't mean anything by it."

The guy must have meant something by it. Williams related the continuation of the incident:

Same guy came up to me a few days later and said: "I'll own you—in anything." My response was: "You need to back off that statement." A group of his friends came to me later to explain that the guy wasn't being racist—it's just that he came from an all white boarding school, and he didn't even mean anything by what he said. But I found myself having to explain context and considerations of audience to them.

Williams describes himself as so up-front and transparent in his communications that he has to examine the statements when somebody else is offensive, even if it's inadvertent. Once again, he is engaged in critical thinking in order to defuse potentially damaging exchanges. The additional pressure to interpret verbal forays in each context could be a fine exercise in rhetorical analysis. The exercise turns out mostly to be an added intellectual burden on the person from the non-dominant culture. When he does encounter a situation where the words and context are clearly inflammatory, he could get angry. If he cannot ignore the perceived offense, Williams chooses instead to make a joke:

I Ignore it. But that leaves me with an avoidance complex. I have a sense that I haven't done something that I should have done—just like when I had to approach the white guy later about calling me boy, just so that he could be aware of what he had done. Such things keep nagging at me until I have to act.

Avoidance could work to a certain extent. But the baggage grows. I want to bring others to a higher level of awareness to facilitate future cooperation and communication.

That duty to reconcile is a great responsibility for one person. It would be far better to have every person in the discourse be aware of the full effect what they are saying and doing is having on others in a certain context. Leaving the responsibility on the person least able to resolve the discomfort is unreasonable when others are available and willing to share the burden.

Shifting from burdens to books, a parallel variety of obstacles impede black candidates who would be commissioned through West Point's Cadet Development Program. Black officer candidates, even those from the middle class, encounter ambushes that are not deliberately set. Despite decades of progress in legal and economic terms, a few systemic barriers in structure and in attitudes continue to stymie black entry to institutions of higher education. That is, the kill zone does exist, but it produces *unintentional* casualties, many of whom are not treated because they are psychological injuries that remain unrecognized. And those casualties are the undergraduates who cannot successfully cope with the dual shocks of college independence and cultural separation. Visible to those willing to observe them are the pressures and risks indicated on the ambush diagram in Figure 4 above. Low expectations and low preparation lead to low graduation rates and lower performance for those who do make it into post-secondary commissioning programs.

At a time when the media is still counting "black firsts," incursions by minority group members into institutions where their culture is not dominant is a risky foray that makes the pioneer vulnerable in several ways—internal and external. The first black astronaut; the first black professional football coach; the first black CEO of a Fortune 500 company; the first black President. Head counting of this sort is unproductive. Continuing to notch black firsts in this manner heightens the nature of black achievement as rare and exceptional, keeping that achievement separate and distinct from the achievements of other citizens. At the same time, it allows apologists to point out the significant advancement of American blacks, intimating that the race problem in American has been settled. The argument there is that if these African Americans can accomplish what they have, then anybody can do so. The argument has some

merit. Much opportunity for advancement is now available to black Americans, especially in the military. A degree of attitudinal adjusting yet remains.

Costly, though less visible, are those immeasurable conflicts internal to the mind and spirit of a black officer entering the predominantly white military. These are the psychic penalties of assimilation that derive from those same pressures in private society, but are amplified by the additionally exclusive nature of military service. Counter-pressures to success for black officer candidates are especially strong when attempting to enter commissioned service via the U.S. Military Academy, one of the most difficult schools for students to get into. The additional mental pressures are rarely revealed in the admissions process.

World Views

People live their lives according to what they believe rather than what they say they believe. Without some outside force shaping our behavior, individual world views drive the way we respond to the stimuli that come from living out our lives.⁵⁹ This is true whether or not we are cognizant of the details of those deeply-held views. Everyone has a world view. Few can articulate them clearly. Inability to define or to describe one's world view derives from the unconscious evolution and acceptance of the view; developing a world view is like acquiring one's native tongue—it just happens. Whenever a person makes a decision, the available choices are unconsciously run through the mental and emotional filters that help make sense of the world. The option selected will be based on belief in what is true, what is significant, and what is appropriate.

Most adult Americans have particular views on race. That is because in American society, much public emphasis through the history of the country has pointed to the inadequacy and deficiency of black people. Those impressions of black pathology may be unmarked, but

⁵⁹ Barna, 19

they are profound. Critical examination of negative impressions and their sources requires constant vigil. Advising leaders that such attentiveness is still necessary is part of the argument of this project.

Most commissioned officers enter the profession of arms with little training in race relations. Unfortunately, treating every person in uniform fairly is inadequate to combat the vestiges of anti-black racism that still exist. No matter how sincere leaders and educators are, reliably identifying personal biases is difficult in the extreme. The military, and the Army in particular, can continue to lead the advance toward cultural equity. Long-term successes in interpersonal professional relations may require extensive training in race relations and cultural significances with regular in-service programs as part of the program of instruction at the various Military Education Levels.⁶⁰ Although it may sound contrary to some, the Army can effectively practice multiculturalism in a narrow band along the acculturation continuum even as it assimilates its volunteers to adopt Army customs. With the Army Diversity Office, conditions for such adaptation are already being established.

In order to achieve the professional benefits of diversity such as expanded critical thinking, ability to handle an increasingly chaotic global state, ability to embrace and act on disparate ideas, diversity must be owned, defined, resourced, measured, and must be held perpetually in mind. Though it seems daunting at first, minority professionals are routinely engaged in this type of perpetual contextual calculus. Deciding whether to speak, how to express themselves, and even choosing what to wear to civilian-dress functions are matters for everyone in the military. Ethnic and gender minorities in the military must take extra care in each of these matters.

⁶⁰ Ng espouses this line of reasoning with respect to academia—it has been adopted here for the military.

Rhetorician and philosopher Kenneth Burke described a world view as a *terministic screen*.⁶¹ By these internal screens people shape their reality by accepting or blocking elements of the common reality—in effect, creating their own world. Most of that highly personalized perception of the world overlaps with the reality shaped by other people living in the same context. Otherwise, communication and cooperation would be quite difficult.

Dominant groups, like subordinate groups, make sense of history through their own terministic screens. Members will deliberately or inadvertently filter out that which seems inconsequential or harmful to their template of the way things were and are and ought to be. That is why multicultural collaboration among officers and soldiers must continue to be advanced.

A multicultural environment could be a boon to West Point and to the Army, or it could fracture the military service into cultural sub-groups each having some overlapping and some competing priorities. Too many competing priorities would result in collective dysfunction or malfunction, some of which was evident at previous times in the segregated army. But the presence of multiple cultures in the Army is fact. Demanding that those various cultures assimilate fully into a military culture is impossible. How wisely the leadership handles the cultural differences matters.⁶²

In June 1999, West Point's Superintendent assigned an assessment committee to complete an institutional self-assessment.⁶³ That self study revealed that with respect to diversity matters, the institution needed serious attention. Military Academy leaders are aware from a series of candid self assessments, of the work that needs to be done. Follow-up actions have included appointment of a faculty diversity committee, increased empowerment of the Equal

⁶¹ Burke *Language as Symbolic Action*, 44-45

⁶² Knotts, 113

⁶³ "Self Study," 73

Opportunity Employment Office, and the creation of a Diversity Office. The argument in this project is that American people, civil leaders, military leaders and individuals seeking high achievement need an attitude change to eliminate what collective vestiges of relative inferiority and superiority remain in the social structure—the media, academia, and in our heads. That includes minority heads, too. Some will argue that our human nature means that people will continue to look for difference to make them feel superior to others. That is not a rationale for giving up. Eliminating skin color as a discriminator would continue the collective attitudinal overhaul.

Black parents and grandparents have long promoted the notion that education was the best means to fight discrimination. It has long been, along with signing up for military service, a way out of poverty and second-class citizenship. “Education is the great equalizer of the conditions of men . . . the balance wheel of the social machinery” argued Horace Mann.⁶⁴ An argument for equity of opportunity in the military service and parity in social interchange certainly involves early education. Besides necessary skills instruction with numbers and letters attitudes are also taught. Perhaps the most powerful influencers of attitude are the parents. But teachers and classroom peers often spend more time with American children than parents. Integrating schools was a necessary move toward equity, for it was based on the premise that separate educations were not at all equal.

Schools were integrated by force in some cases. It still seems true that attitudes cannot be legislated. However, when President Truman issued his executive order to integrate the military, it began a transition that, like school desegregation, has placed the American military at the forefront of racial tolerance, which is now evolving into racial acceptance, which can lead to

⁶⁴ Silberman, 249

racial cooperation and disappearance of racial tension, through disappearance of unproductive racial distinctions.

Of course the U.S. Army, a uniformed service, still requires certain uniform knowledge and common behaviors; there are appearance, demeanor, and behavior expectations that create a necessarily high degree of assimilation. From style and cut of hair on the top of the head to the break in the trousers and type of shoe below shared expectations are clearly outlined in basic training and in the associated regulations. Speaking freely about cultural differences need not equate to acting freely. Increased mutual understanding could lead to a new way of acting, which is liberating. Pre-commissioned candidates entering the profession of arms know that they are not completely free. As officer candidates, they swear an oath to support *The Constitution of the United States*. As officers, they swear to support and defend the *Constitution*, and to obey the orders of officers appointed over them. Defending involves risk of dying. In an inherently dangerous field of soldiering, commissioned officers unwilling to swear loyalty to the supreme law of the land have the obligation to resign their commissions. Continued service is voluntary; allegiance is mandatory.⁶⁵ Mass assimilation is still a responsible path to uniformity, as long as individual cultural identities are not eradicated in the process.

Findings: Respect, Visibility, Faith, and Humor

The horizon seems always to be receding on this type of equity work. Centuries of inequity have caused policies and the thinking that generates those policies to be ensconced deeply in the American psyche. In numerous black caucus meetings, the older educators and politicians often evince the fatigue born of decades of contending with the effects of structural racism. Listen carefully enough, and one can still hear tales of the diversity tax bringing with it hypertension, stress, and depression among senior African Americans. It appears that the

⁶⁵ Knotts 111-112

struggle is being won, because one has to listen much harder to hear such tales from younger blacks.

Recalling the acculturation model in Figure 1, differences that detract from the functioning of the military unit should be modified in order to create high-functioning organizations. Assimilation is necessary. The asymmetrical suppression of individual cultural characteristics must occur wherein Army training deliberately and systematically converts independent actors into members of a group with a common purpose. Assimilation, though, has to leave room for acculturation at some point in personal and unit development.

Failing to accommodate the more symmetrical interchange of culture is disrespectful and discourteous at a minimum. More significantly, attempting to fully eradicate an individual's culture of origin creates an undesirable mental pressure in that person which detracts from a more complete participation in the life and mission of the unit. Common considerations proceed from the semi-structured interviews that offer a way ahead.

The prominent recurring theme from interview discussions with the black males in this study was the galling incidence of perceived disrespect. Each of the respondents noted incidents that caused them anger and resentment. Responses were varied, but the initial reactions were all similar. Chasten mentioned the uniform drill, to which he responded with threats. Etheredge mentioned the assumption of his insider knowledge about what all black people think, to which he responded with silence, and then humor. Huggins mentioned the disdain for his music, to which he responded with resignation at first, followed by loud defiance. Francis mentions a staff officer coming to his battery area to give orders to soldiers under his command, to which he responded first with angry confrontation, then a demanding report to a senior commander to make the situation right, and ultimately with physical violence against both men.

Research among psychologists has shown that among all the needs that men have, spoken respect ranks among the highest.⁶⁶ Respect and appreciation often outstrips love. As Berkeley professor John McWhorter argues, black Americans have made significant economic and social progress since the outlawing of race-based discrimination. The economic and social situation for black people is getting better all the time. One object of this argument is that conditions can be even better during this era of transition, as Americans of all backgrounds cease looking at blacks as victims, because that attitude impedes progress toward equality. The unprecedented opportunity of the Civil Rights era left behind, with the opportunity, a tragic black inferiority complex that has yet to be eliminated.⁶⁷ Recognizing the stereotype threat and working through it is the responsibility of anyone who harbors unexamined prejudices.

Another repetitive theme amongst the respondents was silencing, or being ignored. This aspect of being invisible is closely related to a lack of respect, but is more overtly felt. Instead of being disrespected for a position, opinion, or taste, being treated as *invisible* denies humanity and denies individual worth by denying existence. Consider the episodes that each respondent noted. Chasten noted that during his honor case, his opinion was completely discounted, even after he was asked to provide a written self-assessment as a requisite part of the developmental program. He responded with anger and silence, but only after seeking much counseling about the futility and counterproductive outcome that would result from acting on his anger.

Etheredge mentions silencing in the banking boardroom, until matters of black clients arise. He responded verbally in the sessions when he deemed it worthwhile. Other times he waited for a one-on-one opportunity with a peer or senior to point out what happened in order to

⁶⁶ Smalley & Trent provide case studies and an argument for respect learned in their counseling practice, 17, 29, 55

⁶⁷ McWhorter, 217-218, 220

both avoid public embarrassment or a showdown, and to preclude that type of behavior from recurring.

Huggins mentions having himself and his ideas ignored in department meetings until an officer outside the organization deemed such initiatives worthy (bilingual science instruction for student language immersion). Huggins responded with dismay, then resignation, then productive action. He took charge of the bilingual science instruction as if it had been his idea all along, which of course it was.

Francis was the only respondent who said he refused to be ignored. He notes that it is a miracle that with his strident vocal resistance to being ignored (angrily shoving the battalion executive officer into the battalion commander) he was even able to make a full career of the Army and retire. Francis felt compelled to act in order to be heard in his own command.

A third strand common to these respondents was the heavy influence of their religious faith on their actions and on their choices. When Chasten violated the rules at West Point, it was recalling the faith he learned from his mother that compelled him to confess his wrongdoing. It was that same faith that gave him direction as he persevered through the ignominy of watching his classmates accept their commissions while he went through another year of undergraduate development.

It was Minton Francis' faith that caused him such profound regret when he sought out for years after graduation a particularly mean-spirited upper classman. The man had wreaked such malevolent hazing on Francis that he caused him to pass out. As Francis was regaining consciousness, the cadet was explaining that the Military Academy was not yet ready to accept Negroes, and it would be better for everybody if Francis would just go. Although he admits with

shame the long years after graduation before he could bring himself to do so, Francis succumbed to his biblical beliefs and forgave the man.

Black officers have to maintain a sense of perspective, and a sense of humor. As a majority of the respondents indicated, joking was a way to make a difficult subject palatable, or to ease potential escalation of race tensions. The two that resorted to angry outbursts were both extremely fortunate to avoid martial court and expulsion from the service. Resorting to humor seems to be the coping mechanism of choice for those who want to assimilate and survive.

Clarence Davenport, West Point Class of 1943, was the 6th black to graduate from the Military Academy. Seventeen black cadets had been admitted to the Military Academy before him. Only five graduated. Life at West Point was a trial for black cadets beyond what their white peers endured. More than a third of all cadets routinely washed out before they could finish the rigorous program. Blacks were being eliminated at double that rate. Invited to West Point for a dinner speech to cadets in 2005, the 86-year-old artillery colonel joked about the silencing, the high blood pressure, and the hazing he suffered as a cadet. He said: “It couldn’t have been that bad. I’m still here aren’t I?” Like the other Buffalo Soldiers before him, humor was the balm that soothed much of the pain of race.

Case Study: Bradley Potts, USMA Class of 2012

Bradley Potts is a teenager from Columbus Ohio without family ties to the military; his mother is a physician, his father a lawyer. Unlike several of the other respondents, Potts’ high school counselor in Mayfield, where he moved at age five, recommended he consider attending high-caliber universities such as Pittsburgh and the University of Pennsylvania. Influenced by one of his role models, Potts has decided that he wants to pursue a career in medicine. Physics,

biology, and chemistry all hold his interest. He enumerated his reasons for opting to join the Long Gray Line:

I plan on being an Army doctor. I don't know if I want to be in [the Army] ten years from now, but I know I would like to do some detailed work on the human body. As for West Point, I visited the campus for a summer leadership seminar. I am interested in the structure and character building. I don't see myself on a normal campus just [fooling] around. I noted and liked the structure—the time structure was comforting to me.

Potts says he already tries to live by a personal honor code that does not permit lying or cheating or stealing. He already evinces a degree of selfless service. One example comes from his being offered an American Achievement Award—a merit scholarship. His grades were high enough, but his examination score was a little below the threshold. He was offered the scholarship anyway, because he was black. He turned down the offer. Potts explained that to accept the award under those conditions deprived a more deserving person of the award. He continued to explain why he chose a military school over a civilian university. Potts experienced a range of responses from his peers when they discovered his intent to attend West Point and thereafter join the U.S. Army. Some were proud and supportive, others naysaid his choice. To these reactions, Potts commented simply:

I think everyone is obligated to do something for the country. My mother is all for it—she supports me, as does my father.

Potts grew up in a predominantly white community. He said that he had experienced no cultural isolation—his life was fully integrated with those of his peers. Any problems, he said, were of his own doing.

I have not experienced any more adversity than any other young person in this situation. If I work hard I usually don't have any troubles. [Any tensions were] just occasional local ignorance—nothing major.

Bradley Potts' story is a good news story. He is part of a small minority at a high school with a graduating class of 300, and he cannot identify a single instance of racial disharmony. His experience may still be uncommon among young black males, but the remarkable quality is the progress indicated by the null set of examples from his search for racial injustice or racial tension in his young life. With a deliberate effort, it may take only a few generations to eliminate race unpleasantness perpetuated by the centuries of inequality. As in many areas, hope for the future resides in the minds and hearts of our young.

Recommendations

Consistent among the respondents is reference to the hyper-consciousness of race in much of their daily lives. Narrative responses from oldest to youngest reveal a trend away from egregious negative manifestations of race-based experiences toward an apparently guileless or unnoticeable trace of racialized living. At least this more appealing trend appears to be occurring in places where the tipping point has not been reached. Gratifyingly, the youngest cadet candidates minimized the effects—by failing to mention them—of race in their respective lives until asked specifically about race.

Data from these respondents and current literature suggests that the challenges of racial considerations continue to negatively impact officers of color. Effects are less noticeable with each generation. A lack of notice seems to be in large part because of successes due to ongoing integration. Some of the downturn in reporting of negative effects may be acceptance of black roles, or complacency among black youth because they are not being openly barred from lunch counters or suffering public denial of services or access. Evidence of some negativity yet remains. Relatively low black graduation rates are one indicator. Low rates of black promotion are another. High unemployment, high blood pressure, and high mortality all

plague black people in America. Standardized test scores are another performance measure that reveals a lack of parity. Comments from the interviewees confirm that some negative pressures remain in and out of the military.

Some of that negative impact is self-induced. More of it is the result of American society's clinging to notions of pathology or inferiority based on tradition and custom more than on fact—though there is a degree to which the expectations are consistently achieved among those of whom little is expected. Recommendations arising from the research begin with those from the individuals most affected by the pressure—black men themselves.

Individual Equity Development

Prospective officer candidates can condition themselves for success. Diligence in the classroom is a start. Recognizing, then setting aside stereotype threats will help remove an attitude of entitlement or victimization. Black officers who perceive themselves to be under constant attack have a hard time being anything but defensive.

Apply appropriate coping mechanisms, such as humor and faith. Discussion with peers can be a great help to identify which offenses need to be addressed, and which ones need to be dismissed. Have goals, written down, to be accomplished. Professional and personal goals give an officer a direction and a purpose. The list of things that black officer candidates must do for themselves begins with self-confidence and self-advocacy.

Some months ago while on a research trip to Washington I went to lunch at Howard University with H. Minton Francis. He paid. On this trip, I had been in the basement archives for hours, sorting through Francis' papers with the help of Joellen ElBashir, the dedicated curator of the Moorland-Spingarn Collection. She joined us for the midday meal at the faculty cafeteria.

During that lunch, I asked him what his continuing goals for the future were. The senior living black West Point graduate paused and thought for many minutes. Then he answered: “I don’t have any.”

After a lifetime of active and often feisty leadership in pursuit of fairness in the Army, in entertainment, in education, and in politics, H. Minton Francis was done. After his memoirs are published, there is nothing more pressing him forward. He has struggled and won for a long time. Much of Francis’ considerable talent was diverted from other productive ventures toward the destruction of barriers and policies that distract African Americans from full productive participation in the national efforts—public and private. If this project can bring awareness to leaders and followers that will allow people like Minton Francis and Terance Williams freedom to apply themselves to other matters than a struggle for racial equity, the purpose will have been realized. This is hardly the first attempt to retrieve for black Americans a healthy sense of self-worth.

One of the main purposes of the forty-year Harlem Renaissance that began in the 1920’s was to recover a noble past for black Americans. The movement was a deliberate effort by artists, musicians, and writers to develop and collect artifacts that signaled the greatness of a people that extended back culturally to a time before slavery and forward chronologically beyond the oppressive 1920s, 30s, 40s, and 50s to a future of social equality. In order to claim that noble heritage, blacks must know the history of black Americans, including their own, no matter how variegated it may be. Study family genealogy and the history of civil rights as a start. Understanding the trajectory of blacks in the military is an area of study that can be quite fruitful; few large organizations have done with integrations what the Army has done and had such success.

Some fine black literature is in the canon of great American poetry and prose, including work by Alain Locke, W.E.B. Du Bois, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Langston Hughes, and James Weldon Johnson. Works of more contemporary writers and poets and playwrights (Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, Spike Lee) are worth integrating into a reading and viewing schedule, too.

Some people still see each black person as a representative of all blacks. As a result, black males who are willing should accept the unreasonable but still necessary burden of sloughing off undesirable stereotypes by achieving excellence in the areas they choose as vocations and avocations. Blacks are especially under-represented in science and technical fields, and in the combat arms branches of the U.S. Army. Sometimes attaining exemplary proficiency means working longer and seeking help to achieve high marks or high performance.

Individuals should locate a mentor who can help in various aspects of growth: one for work, one for a hobby, another for social development. When able, become a mentor. Know your specialty so well that none can challenge your understanding; at the same time continue to learn from those who can offer new insight. A humble attitude about help need not impinge on the ability to lead.

Black Americans, especially older blacks, have been hyper-sensitized to racism. They may see racism in an incident where a clerk or passer-by is just having a bad day. Black people must take care when involving race as the reason for injustice. Doing so often works against the accuser, and usually leaves at least one party feeling hurt or defensive. Avoiding racial accusations altogether is not always the right answer, but it usually is. Victims of racism should remain victims for as short a period as possible before moving on. Black Americans

have more opportunity in today's society than at any time since the founding of the nation.⁶⁸ Take advantage of the educational and political privileges of the country as early and as often as possible. The power to vote and to express one's self politically is a right that many before us have sacrificed their lives to achieve. That right out to be exercised regularly. Conditions for black Americans are improving. Hard-won changes for social betterment need constant nurturing.

The situation for black Army officers is improving, too, albeit perhaps more slowly than the Army would like. As a leader in integration, Army leaders can continue to use command influence to banish vestigial notions of contrived racial distinctions that hinder cooperation and hurt performance. Some programs are already in place, and more are under development.

Institutional Equity Education

Equity is a more precise term for the proposed ultimate outcome—what success looks like. Equity is achieved when underrepresented populations succeed in any variety of measures of their represented group. It is a comprehensive, Army-wide assessment of inequalities in professional outcomes with respect to access, enrollment, academic disciplines, retention, evaluations, and graduation. The Army value of respect refers to “treating people as they should be treated”⁶⁹ and stresses the importance of recognizing and appreciating the inherent dignity and worth of all people. That is different than the Golden Rule, which admonishes people to treat others as they themselves would want to be treated. This Army standard requires more effort. Persons seeking to meet the Army respect standard must strive to learn enough about other persons and cultures to work amicably in that narrow realm between acculturation and complete assimilation.

⁶⁸ Cose in “12 Things” 52, 55.

⁶⁹ “Respect SOP,” 1-1

One means of measuring progress, though imperfect, is the U.S. Coast Guard's Equity Scorecard. "Keeping score" has unfortunate negative connotations, but the Equity Scorecard is meant to be a set of holistic evaluations and systemic strategies that highlight race, ethnicity, gender, and class inequities so that leaders can take actions to generate the kind of organization they want.⁷⁰ Elements observed include leader involvement, well-understood measurable goals, and robust resourcing in terms of people, education, and money. Leaders who want to invest more substantially in the welfare of African American professionals can attend to the existing programs and endorse reasonable recommendations from an empowered Diversity Office. Examples of programs that can work are the Consideration of Others instruction⁷¹ for cadets at the U.S. Military Academy, and the biennial Leadership Diversity conference for cadets, officers, and friends of the Military Academy. Among the core principles in the West Point Respect Program is that we are all respect officers:

We are all Respect Officers. The Army value of Respect tells us to "treat people as they should be treated" and stresses recognizing and appreciating the inherent dignity and worth of all people. As America becomes more culturally diverse, leaders must be aware that they will communicate with people from a wide range of ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds. Effective leaders are able to recognize and appreciate beliefs different from their own and foster a climate in which everyone is treated with dignity and worth regardless of race, color, gender, religion or national origin. . . We must embrace and value the natural differences that exist between individuals within our organization.⁷²

From the Diversity Office at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy comes a program that includes a diversity scorecard.⁷³ Education programs at each level of military education levels from candidate programs through basic officer courses, intermediate staff college and senior war college curricula can include reinforcing and progressive instruction on respect, using the

⁷⁰ Farias, Equity Scorecard

⁷¹ "USCC Respect and Equal Opportunity Program,"

⁷² USCC Respect, 1-3

⁷³ See Appendix A

West Point program as a starting point, and tailoring the instruction based upon the military education level of the institution. A sample of a brief program is included at Appendix B.

As we learn more about the subtle features of inequity, eliminating those denigrating aspects should occur to remove known areas of structural racism such as coded language in officer evaluation reports and homogenous selection of mentorees. Include cultural markers such as dress, speech acts, demeanor and mannerisms, and their effects on the other military subcultures subject matter for military schooling.

Although the Army cannot make up for years of neglect in early development, what leaders *can* do is raise expectations above mediocrity for black officer candidates in the classroom and in training. Keep standards high, and demand that candidates show how they plan to succeed. Where undergraduates are involved, involve cadets in informal officer gatherings to ensure that they understand the culture they are entering.

A critical mass of black officers is one of the essential elements to attracting and retaining black junior officers. The Army should continue as a priority opening avenues of opportunity for black officer candidates and black officers, rather than concentrating on removing evidence of intolerance. Racial insensitivity is already punishable; consider making racial attentiveness a screening criterion for promotion, alongside leadership, competence in specialty areas, initiative, and commitment to organization values and missions.⁷⁴

Attention to the condition of black American males in this argument is a project born on the assumption that the case of black Americans is in need of special attention in order to achieve the permanent social and professional equity that has thus far eluded them in this country. As Charles Moskos puts it:

⁷⁴ Moskos, 132-136

The basic social dichotomy in [American] society is black versus nonblack. . . . The confluence of race, slavery, and segregation has created a social reality that in the American experience is unparalleled. . . . The Afro-American story is singular and is of such magnitude that it cannot be compared to the experiences of other ethnic groups. . . . race overrides class as a source of ingrained prejudice in our country.⁷⁵

Thus, we end where we began. The race problem is at the core of the American experience. Army leaders will want to better understand the reactions they might expect from people of color, and some reasons for them—that understanding could remove some of the trepidation in addressing race matters candidly, moving the Army closer to the full resolution of racial tensions that we all seek. The race problem is a challenge created in the minds of white and black citizens before it is exercised by hands. Racial negativity can be overcome by a collective decision similar to the series of decisions that created it. We undertake that effort with renewed energy.

Further research should explore the reasoning of those persons in the target communities who eschewed military service altogether, and the thinking of those who sampled Army life and found it somehow wanting. Ex-cadets who departed West Point prior to graduation may provide a harvest of useful knowledge that could be put to use further enhancing the welcome and comfiture of blacks in the Corps of Cadets. Substantial progress is being made; the U.S. Army has been a national leader in first desegregating, then integrating blacks into full soldier-citizenship. We are now in an era of non-tolerance. The goal is an environment of full acceptance of black officers without reservations based on false notions of race differences, and a genuine valuing of each service member's contribution and culture. The graphic below⁷⁶ may help to visualize a desirable movement through the hierarchy from recognition to valuing others.

⁷⁵ Moskos, 139

⁷⁶ Modified from Andre Sayles' Leading Diversity brief

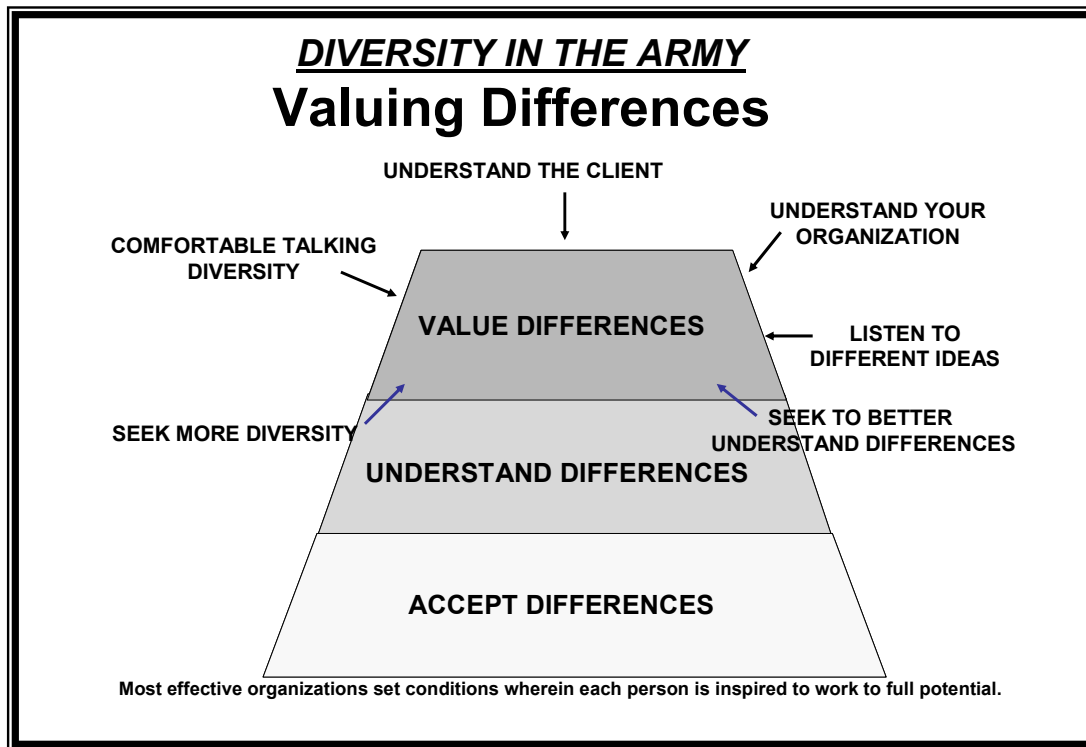


Figure 6. Value Hierarchy

This latter hierarchy that leads to valuing others is not an argument that every aspect of a person's culture of origin is worthy of unlimited respect. Some cultural practices ought not to be an integral part of the assimilated soldier or officer because those practices would hinder both people and mission. Discrimination of some sort must be a part of the selection process for commissioning. What this argument decries is discrimination based on race. In an army that is 40% ethnic minority, learning to enjoy the extant and burgeoning diversity is among the wisest recourses we can take. Soon leaders and subordinates relish seeking out the ideas of those who think differently to discover perspectives that illuminate in original ways approaches to resolve increasingly perplexing challenges the U.S. Army is being tasked to address.

Success is attainable when the soldier-centric Army knows its roles and missions, and identifies those character traits and skills that add value to its purpose. The Army has codified much of what it expects from soldiers in its Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor,

integrity, and personal courage. Within that core of respect, honor and courage we have a duty to treat people entering the service with the expectation that they have unlimited potential.

Equity can be achieved when individuals enter a military organization with a dream to realize that is consistent with the vision of the Army. Each citizen-soldier should maintain something of themselves as we help them achieve that dream.

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Appendix A—United States Coast Guard Academy Diversity Office Equity Scorecard

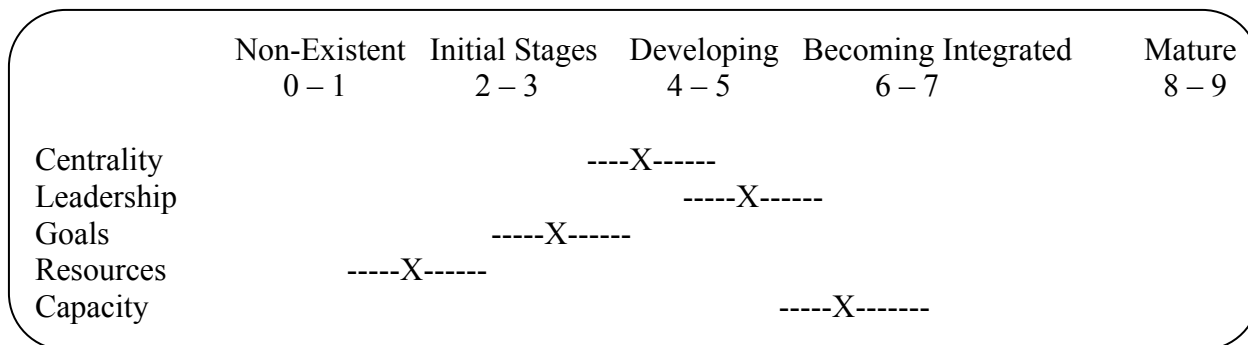


Figure 7. Diversity Scorecard

The Military Academy should have a systemic sustainable approach to diversity management. The newly created Leading Diversity Office has that mission. At West Point, the Superintendent has directed that each department head define numerically, using the Army categories, what their diversity goals are for faculty composition. The organizing structure of the scorecard will provide the Academy a way to systematically take a series of steps toward developing a successful and sustainable diversity management system.

Regarding centrality and leadership, the first two elements of the diversity initiative include a series of educational dialogues to engage the faculty, staff, and cadets intended to provide a common language and basic tool set from which a robust, organic, and sustainable community of inclusion can grow (see proposal at Appendix B).

The Military Academy could also adopt a version of the above Equity Scorecard (citation ES) to measure Centrality by viewing the faculty, Corps of Cadets, curriculum, and the specific policies/practices through the lens of diversity in terms of inclusion, recruitment, and retention.

Appendix B—Diversity Engagement Template for Conferences or Short-Term Instruction

1. Orientation Phase. Presentation of diversity lecture series.
2. Information Phase. Commissioned officers will provide details of experiences in minority enlisted and officer experiences. Invited speakers (sociologist) will then address cultural implications.
3. Perspective Phase. Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness or representative provides a Department of Defense perspective on diversity. Selected leaders and community members will be invited to augment perspective.
4. Preparation Phase. A distinguished lecturer from business or academe or the U.S. Government will offer insights on root causes and how to address the challenges.
5. Working Phase. Small groups develop solutions to the identified challenge questions.
6. Reflection Phase. Selected person (leader, author, or specialist) offers a national perspective on the challenge question.
7. Assessment Phase. Working groups will present their recommendations in an ongoing, iterative short-format style

Appendix C—Core Question Set for Interviewees

Each respondent entered into a conversation having signed a human subject consent waiver, and with a tape recorder in plain sight. Respondents often assumed the lead in the conversation, and the following questions were introduced at appropriate points during the exchange. Questions highlighted in gray were not asked of each respondent, as some lacked the knowledge or experience to address them adequately.

1. Opening questions establish a conversational base:

- What is your name?
- Do you mind sharing your age?
- Talk about where you were born, about your family, and your life growing up.
- Who were the major influences in your life?
- Who are your role models?
- Are there elements of faith in your life?
- What events in your young life influenced your later years?
- What are some of your life goals?
- What are your talents?

2. A second series of questions were intended to transition to considerations of West Point:

- What motivated you to attend the Military Academy?
- How did you prepare (or how are you preparing) to attend West Point?
- Do you have any stories associated with your time at West Point?
- Did you experience adversity at West Point? How did you cope with adversity you experienced as a cadet?
- What were your support mechanisms (especially those that might carry over to contemporary cadets who are having trouble getting through the program)?

3. A third set of questions was a transition to the subject of race and its impact on the respondent:

- Have you found that race matters impacted your West Point experience?
- Have you felt culturally isolated at USMAPS (West Point)?
- Did you find that particular policies made an impact on your life decisions?

- Can you help readers better understand what systemic language and cultural factors impact on acceptance and performance for black officers?
- What aspects of the professional (military) culture impact black acceptance and performance?
- What leader perceptions have you discerned that factor into acceptance and success for contemporary African American officer candidates and officers?
- What influences (or influenced) your attitude toward or away from a career of military service?
- How can West Point affect changes in environment, influence group acceptance, and promote individual self-acceptance to develop high performing African American commissioned officers?
- (I)What can Army leaders do to sustain the careers of African American officers?
- What discourages African Americans from serving the country as commissioned officers in the U.S. Army?
- What advice do you have for potential officers?
- What advice do you have for potential officers regarding:
 - attitudes about the military among blacks today?
 - cultural isolation?
 - lack of role models?
 - fear during military training or service?
 - boredom while in training or service?
- What coping mechanisms have served you well?
- How can the Army improve minority efficacy?
- What suggestions can you offer for what the Army can do to improve minority efficacy through:
 - respect classes?
 - consideration of others?
 - diversity programs?
 - particular areas of study?
 - college courses (or courses & classes embedded in the professional military education system)?

Other means?

- How conscious are you of racial matters?
- Have you been active in matters of race?
- (Optional opinion) Does the Army need minority officers? Explain.
- What percentage of blacks do you think there should be at West Point? In the Army?
What is your rationale for that ratio?
- (Optional opinion) Do you perceive that the US Army has an overall shortage of African American officers (to help lead its increasingly diverse force)?
- (Optional opinion) Is the U.S. Army experiencing a dearth of African American officers in the combat arms specialties?